

# **Legitimacy and risk**

*Perceptions of organizational risk in  
a Norwegian non-governmental organization*

**Gilbia Santos Portela**



**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in  
Culture, Environment and Sustainability**

Centre for Development and the Environment

University of Oslo

Blindern, Norway

October, 2012



---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES .....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	3
1.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH .....	4
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS .....	6
<b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 RISK PERCEPTION.....	7
2.1.1 <i>Risk perception in organizations</i> .....	9
2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	15
2.2.1 <i>Defining risk</i> .....	17
2.2.2 <i>Understanding organizations</i> .....	22
<b>3. SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY (SCN) .....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1 SCN AT A GLANCE.....	34
3.2 UNIFICATION .....	37
3.3 LEGAL AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT.....	40
3.4 SCN'S STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT.....	41
3.4.1 <i>Emphasis on measurable results</i> .....	44
3.4.2 <i>Working with partners</i> .....	46
3.4.3 <i>Financial management</i> .....	47
3.4.4 <i>Humanitarian assistance</i> .....	49

---

3.4.5	<i>Advocacy work</i> .....	49
3.4.6	<i>Risk management</i> .....	50
<b>4.</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>52</b>
4.1	RESEARCH DESIGN .....	52
4.1.1	<i>A socio-cultural perspective on risk</i> .....	52
4.1.2	<i>A qualitative approach</i> .....	53
4.1.3	<i>Case-study method</i> .....	54
4.2	DATA COLLECTION .....	55
4.2.1	<i>Access to fieldwork</i> .....	56
4.2.2	<i>Interviews</i> .....	57
4.2.3	<i>Documents</i> .....	61
4.3	DATA ANALYSIS .....	61
4.4	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	62
4.4.1	<i>Anonymity</i> .....	62
4.4.2	<i>Safeguarding the organization</i> .....	63
4.4.3	<i>Raising risk issues</i> .....	63
4.5	CHALLENGES AND STUDY LIMITATIONS .....	64
4.5.1	<i>Research access and sampling</i> .....	64
4.5.2	<i>The problem of researching risk</i> .....	65
4.5.3	<i>Problems involved in exploratory case-study design</i> .....	66
<b>5.</b>	<b>DECONSTRUCTING RISK</b> .....	<b>69</b>
5.1	RISK OBJECTS .....	69
5.1.1	<i>Staff</i> .....	70
5.1.2	<i>Partners</i> .....	73

---

5.1.3	<i>The host country</i> .....	75
5.1.4	<i>The host government</i> .....	80
5.2	OBJECTS AT RISK .....	84
5.2.1	<i>Staff</i> .....	84
5.2.2	<i>Funds</i> .....	86
5.2.3	<i>Results</i> .....	90
5.2.4	<i>Children</i> .....	93
5.2.5	<i>Reputation</i> .....	96
5.3	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....	101
<b>6.</b>	<b>RISK PERCEPTION AND THE PURSUIT OF LEGITIMACY</b> .....	<b>105</b>
6.1	ORGANIZATIONAL RISK PERCEPTION: BEYOND PRACTICE AND CONTEXT .....	105
6.1.1	<i>Putting risk into a larger context</i> .....	109
6.2	INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS OF RISK PERCEPTION .....	111
6.2.1	<i>Legitimacy, value and objects at risk</i> .....	112
6.2.2	<i>The dilemmas of NGO legitimacy</i> .....	119
6.3	LIMITATIONS .....	122
<b>7.</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>125</b>
7.1	THE THESIS IN A NUTSHELL .....	125
7.2	COMMENTS ON THE RELATIONAL THEORY OF RISK .....	128
7.3	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES .....	130
	<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>131</b>
	A. INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	131
	B. NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS .....	133
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>137</b>

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

### Tables

Table 1: Dimensions and sources of NGO legitimacy.....	29
Table 2: SCN's mission, vision, values and working principles.....	36
Table 3: Measurable results.....	44
Table 4: Sample overview.....	60

### Figures

Figure 1: Douglas' grid and group framework. ....	9
Figure 2: Risk as a relationship.....	22
Figure 3: SCN's organizational structure (as of November 2011) .....	42
Figure 4: Organizational chart – Country Office Ethiopia (as of September 2010) .....	43
Figure 5: Distribution of costs – 2011 .....	47
Figure 6: Relationships of risk – staff as risk object.....	70
Figure 7: Relationships of risk – partners as risk object .....	73
Figure 8: Relationships of risk – host country as risk object .....	76
Figure 9: Relationships of risk – host government as risk object .....	81
Figure 10: Relationships of risk – staff as an object at risk .....	85
Figure 11: Relationships of risk – funds as an object at risk .....	87

---

Figure 12: Relationships of risk – results as an object at risk.....	91
Figure 13: Relationships of risk – children as an object at risk .....	93
Figure 14: Relationships of risk – reputation as an object at risk.....	97
Figure 15: Relationships of risk – summary .....	103
Figure 16: Span of an NGO’s control.....	119

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>%</b>	Percent
<b>AEP</b>	Alternative Education Program
<b>Alliance</b>	International Save the Children Alliance
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CPH</b>	Core Processes Harmonization
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DFID</b>	The United Kingdom Department for International Development
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>ICNL</b>	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
<b>INGO</b>	international non-governmental organization
<b>IPU</b>	SCI's International Programs Unit
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>LEVE</b>	Livelihoods in Developing Countries
<b>LogFrame</b>	Logical Framework Matrix
<b>MFA</b>	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>NOK</b>	Norwegian krone (currency unit)
<b>Norad</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>NRCER</b>	Network for Research into the Construction of Environmental Risk
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>SC</b>	Save the Children
<b>SCI</b>	Save the Children International
<b>SCN</b>	Save the Children Norway
<b>SCS</b>	Save the Children Sweden
<b>SCUK</b>	Save the Children United Kingdom
<b>SCUS</b>	Save the Children United States
<b>SUM</b>	Centre for Development and the Environment
<b>USAID</b>	The United States Agency for International Development
<b>USD</b>	The United States dollar
<b>VAT</b>	Value Added Tax
<b>WANGO</b>	World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis was a long and challenging journey, which would not have been possible without the support of several people and institutions. To begin with, I would like to thank Save the Children Norway (SCN) for allowing me access to its staff and internal documents. I am sincerely grateful to all employees who spared time out of their busy schedules to share their thoughts about risk with me. Thanks, also, to the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) for two great years of my life. I would also like to thank LEVE (Livelihoods in Developing Countries) for the scholarship that allowed me to concentrate on this thesis.

Thanks to my supervisor, Professor Sidsel Roalkvam, for comments and feedback on this thesis. I would also like to thank Professor Hervé Corvellec of Lund University, for reading and commenting on draft chapters. Thanks to my family, fellow master students at SUM, and friends for help and support along the way.

Finally, I would like to thank Mats Bakken, who participated in endless discussions about risks and never stopped believing in me. This thesis is dedicated to you, Mats.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The past decade has seen a growing trend towards risk management in the aid industry (Carter *et al.* 2008, Kingston and Behn 2010, OECD 2011). This growth of “risk talk” (Power 2004) has been driven by three developments: the aid effectiveness agenda; the rising incidence of attacks on aid workers (Stoddard *et al.* 2009); and the increasing donor attention to corruption in development assistance (Trivunovic *et al.* 2011).

Evidence of this shift can be found among donors, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For instance, in 2010 the Danish government hosted a conference, “Results, Risk Assessment and Management in Development Cooperation – Towards a Common Approach,” on the management of aid risks in fragile states. Other bilateral donors and UN agencies (among them, Canada, Sweden, the United Nations Development Program and the World Food Program) are also increasingly attracted to risk management approaches from the business sector, such as the Enterprise Risk Management framework (OECD 2011:68).

On the NGO side, most organizations have adopted various risk-related policies, such as anti-corruption, protection of beneficiaries, employee code of conduct, and security. Some organizations, such as Plan and Save the Children, have also introduced an overall risk policy, or are in the process of doing so. And other NGOs, among them the Norwegian Red Cross, have established cooperation agreements with the business sector for competence exchange on risk management (Gravlien 2012). Moreover, ten years ago many NGOs did not have full-time security advisors; today the majority do (Rowley *et al.* 2010).

Another indicator of the rise of risk management in the aid industry is the growing number of publications on risk and its management in humanitarian

---

and development work (e.g. Wilson-Grau 2003, Herman *et al.* 2004, Bertrand and Brown 2006, Grace 2010, Ward and Purdy 2010, Trivunovic *et al.* 2011).

Any attempt to manage risks must inevitably begin with the identification of risks. Once an organization knows the risks, action can be taken to address them (Hubbard 2009:31). The whole risk management endeavor rests on this initial step, as it determines which issues will be selected for attention as risks and which issues will be taken for granted (Macrae 2007). The word “identification” implies that risk is some objective property of the world, just waiting to be recognized, quantified, and managed. However, much social science analysis has challenged this technical-rationalistic approach, arguing that risk is subjective (Slovic 1999) and socially constructed (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982).

The body of scholarship referred to as “risk perception research” has shown that a great many factors influence how people characterize, interpret, and make judgments about risks (Urban and Ščasný 2007). These include heuristics and probability judgment biases (Tversky and Kahneman 1974); characteristics of the risk (Fischhoff *et al.* 1978); religious and quasi-religious beliefs (Kouabenan 1998, Sjöberg and Wahlberg 2002); trust (Flynn *et al.* 1992, Slovic 1999); feelings (Slovic *et al.* 2004); personality traits (Chauvin 2007); cultural dispositions and worldviews (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, Douglas 1985, Rayner 1986); personal experience (Rogers 1997); socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender and race (Flynn *et al.* 1994, Hakes and Viscusi 2004); mass-media coverage (Freudenburg *et al.* 1996, Wählberg and Sjöberg 2000); and information retrieval (Liu *et al.* 1998). Studies of risk perception in organizational settings have added further factors to the list, such as profession, working environment, functional area, position in the hierarchy, and scope of responsibilities (Marek *et al.* 1985, Rayner 1986, Mearns *et al.* 2001, Hutter and Power 2005, Mohammed 2007).

Although the identification of risks is neither self-evident nor unproblematic, people do make decisions and act based on their perception of risks (Slovic and Weber 2002). Therefore, understanding what factors account for those perceptions is essential for a more reflexive and critical approach to risk management. This is particularly relevant for development and humanitarian NGOs. Given the nature of their activities, NGOs rely heavily on the judgments of their employees in navigating around a large range of risks – such as the risk of causing harm to beneficiaries, risks to the safety and security of staff, risks of corruption, risk of reputational loss, or the risk that funding might be discontinued (Herman *et al.* 2004, Metcalfe *et al.* 2011). Thus, investigating how NGO workers interpret and make sense of risks is not an issue solely of academic concern, but is of strategic and practical importance to NGOs.

## 1.1 Objectives and research questions

The purpose of the study is twofold. The first objective is to develop an understanding of the issues framed as risks by employees of an international development and humanitarian NGO. This thesis is especially concerned with “organizational risks,” that is, risks that directly or indirectly can affect an organization, its process, activities and objectives. The second objective is to examine where these risk understandings might originate.

The aims of this study translate into the following research questions:

1. What do employees identify as a risk for their organization?
2. How do employees form judgments about organizational risks?

As mentioned, there are countless points of entry into risk perception research, from employees’ personality traits to hierarchical level, passing through cultural dispositions, feelings and other factors. Given the impossibility of

---

exploring, in a brief master's thesis, how these multiple factors interact with one another, I decided to investigate perceptions of organizational risk from an angle that has received little attention so far. Most studies of risk perception in organizational settings (including NGOs) focus on one's position within the organization (e.g. Marek *et al.* 1985, Rayner 1986, Cox and Flin 1998, Pidgeon 1998, Hutter 2001, Mohammed 2007, 2010). In this thesis, I explore the possible linkages between perceptions of organizational risk and the operating context of development and humanitarian NGOs, or what has become known as the "aid industry." Drawing on the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011) and new institutionalism in organizational analysis (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), I investigate how rules, laws, belief systems, conventions, and paradigms widespread in the aid industry influence what issues are framed as organizational risks by employees. This in turn means that I provide only a partial explanation for the second research question.

## 1.2 Methodological approach

This thesis consists of a single case study, Save the Children Norway (in Norwegian: *Redd Barna*), hereafter referred to as SCN. Founded in 1946, SCN is an international non-governmental organization (INGO) based in Oslo. One of the largest INGOs in the country, SCN works to promote children's rights and improve the living conditions of vulnerable children through long-term development and humanitarian aid. Undoubtedly, SCN provides a rich setting for a variety of research topics. Given the objectives this study, however, the organization was selected because of research access considerations rather than its intrinsic uniqueness.

The case-study method was considered the most appropriated approach for investigating NGO workers' perceptions of risk, given the focus on

---

organizational risks rather than risks to employees themselves. Since this topic remains barely examined, an open-ended and inductive approach was adopted. A broad set of questions was used during data collection, rather than one final research problem or hypothesis (Yin 2003a,b). As an exploratory study, this thesis cannot produce more than leads, directions, and hypotheses for further inquiry. Therefore, the findings presented in this study cannot and should not be generalized to SCN as a whole.

This study is ontologically and epistemologically grounded on a social-cultural perspective on risk (e.g. Lupton and Tulloch 2002a,b, Tulloch and Lupton 2003, Bickerstaff 2004). Rejecting the view of risk as an objective entity, this approach posits that risk is the product of human judgment; hence, risk understandings are inevitably shaped by social processes as well as individual experience (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn 2006, Zinn 2006). In other words, risk is not “out there”; like beauty, it lies in the eyes of the beholder (Dafel and Jackson 2000:2).

A socio-cultural perspective calls for a qualitative research approach which can allow scholars to explore how risk understandings are constructed in the actual context where people encounter and make judgments about risk. Two qualitative data collection techniques were employed: in-depth semi-structure interviews, and document analysis. The analysis presented in the following chapters is based primarily on the interview material. In all, 16 interviews were conducted face-to-face at SCN's head office in Oslo, six through Skype and one by email. This allowed me to reach employees in four countries, which would have otherwise been impossible due to time and funding constraints.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, my goal was to interview a heterogeneous group of employees, in terms of work location, functional area, and hierarchy level. However, a maximum variation sampling strategy was only partially successful, due to problems of access. In total, 23 employees participated in this study: 11 from SCN's head office in Oslo; one each from

Save the Children International and Save the Children Denmark; and 10 employees from local offices in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nepal, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Fieldwork was conducted in Norway between August 31 and November 22, 2011.

### 1.3 Structure of the thesis

This study consists of seven chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on risk perception and presents the theoretical framework employed. Chapter 3 provides an overview of SCN as of December 2011, in order to familiarize the reader with the case organization, setting the stage for the study of perceptions of organizational risk. Chapter 4 describes how the study was conducted and the rationale underlying the choice of research methods. Chapter 5 draws on the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011) to present and analyze the organizational risks identified by SCN staff. The focus is on the first research question: What do employees identify as a risk for their organization? Chapter 6 discusses the research findings in the light of the literature. Drawing on the relational theory of risk and the new institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), it also provides a partial explanation of how employees form judgments about organizational risks. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the thesis, discusses some implications for theory and offers recommendations for further research.



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter reviews the literature and presents the theories used to interpret perceptions of organizational risk among SCN staff. The first section introduces the phenomenon of risk perception and surveys relevant literature on risk perception in organizational settings, including NGOs. The second section outlines the theoretical framework used in this study.

### 2.1 Risk perception

Starting with Chauncey Starr's (1969) seminal work on risk acceptance and voluntariness (Sjöberg 2000:1), risk perception research investigates how people form judgments about risks (Wilkinson 2001). This body of scholarship emerged as a rejection of the view of risk as an objective property of natural events or human activities (Slovic and Weber 2002). According to Slovic *et al.* (1982:83), studies on risk perception have three main objectives:

- (i) to discover what people mean when they say that something is (or is not) 'risky', and to determine what factors underlie those perceptions,
- (ii) to develop a theory of risk perception that predicts how people will respond to new hazards and management strategies (...), and (iii) to develop techniques for assessing the complex and subtle opinions that people have about risk.

Nevertheless, risk perception means different things to different researchers. The term has been used to describe "attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and cognitions about risk" (Coleman 1993:612-613). This reflects the multidisciplinary nature of risk perception scholarship and researchers' disagreement as to how to define the concept of risk itself (Renn 1998, Aven 2011).

Originally established by psychologists in the 1970s (Bickerstaff 2004:827), the study of risk perception has gradually involved contributors from the fields

---

of sociology, anthropology, and geography (Bickerstaff 2004:827). The two dominant theories come from distinct disciplines (Krimsky 1992, Sjöberg *et al.* 2004): the *psychometric paradigm* (Fischhoff *et al.* 1978), which is rooted in psychology and decision theory; and *cultural theory* (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, Douglas 1985, 1992), which is grounded in anthropology and sociology.<sup>1</sup>

The psychometric paradigm investigates the individual cognitive processes involved in how people form subjective judgments about risk. According to Oltedal *et al.* (2004), the basic assumption is that people evaluate the risk associated with a given activity or technology (nuclear power, driving a car, smoking, diagnostic X-rays, etc.) based on the characteristics they attribute to the issue in question (controllable or uncontrollable; voluntary or involuntary; effect delayed or immediate; etc.). Psychometric studies generally use quantitative techniques, such as questionnaires, psychological rating scales and statistical methods (Slovic 1992). Participants are first asked to identify the characteristic of a list of activities or technologies, and then to evaluate their perceived riskiness (*ibid.*). Activities, technologies, and characteristics to be tested are all pre-selected by researchers. Despite its cognitive emphasis, the psychometric paradigm has gradually opened up for social and cultural determinants of risk perception (see Peters and Slovic 1996, Slovic and Peters 1998).

Developed as a critique to the psychometric approach (Boholm 2008:9), cultural theory focuses on the role of group membership and social context in shaping what issues are regarded as risks. For cultural theorists, risk is not the product of individual cognition, but a social construct subject to social structure, institutions, values, and belief systems (Douglas and Wildavsky

---

<sup>1</sup> Other less famous theories include *simplified conjoint expected risk* (SCER) (Holtgrave and Weber 1993), the *social amplification of risk* (Kasperson *et al.* 1988) and the *basic risk perception model* (BRPM) (Sjöberg 1993).

1982). The basic assumption is that risk reflects what people understand as a threat to their social group (Rayner 1986). Consequently, members of social groups that have different convictions and perceptions of reality — or “worldviews” — will single out different issues for attention as risks (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982:8).

Researchers have identified four main types of worldviews:<sup>2</sup> the individualist, which sees threats to individual freedom as a risk; the egalitarian, which is concerned with issues that could lead to greater inequality; the hierarchical, which fears what could jeopardize order in society; and the fatalistic worldview, which is either unaware of risks or assumes them to be inevitable (Olteidal *et al.* 2004:19-21). These worldviews derive from Douglas’ (1978) grid and group analytical framework (see Figure 1). In this schema, “grid”

refers to the extent to which individuals accept structural constraints such as hierarchy and procedural regulation, whereas “group” expresses the degree of group cohesiveness (Renn 1998:61). These prototypes, however, should be seen as an analytic device rather than a definitive explanation (Aven and Renn 2010).

Figure 1: Douglas’ grid and group framework

		Grid		
		High		
Low	Fatalistic		Hierarchic	Group
			High	

---

Short 1993, Hutter and Power 2005). They influence public debates on risk (Clarke and Short 1993) and manage risks that have large societal implications if things go wrong – take, for instance, the consequences of BP’s oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico or the Fukushima nuclear disaster. From an organizational perspective, the management of risks is an inherent feature of organizations. Directly or indirectly, all management functions and processes play a role in safeguarding the organization from risk and uncertainty (Hutter and Power 2005). Organizations themselves are becoming increasingly aware of their risk exposure, as attested by the growing popularity of risk management frameworks (Power 2004, 2009). Nevertheless, the topic of risk and organizations remains largely unexplored by scholars (Jaeger *et al.* 2001:165-166). This is also the case with risk perception research. According to Chess (2001:186), studies have traditionally focused “on the perceptions of lay people rather than that of managers of corporations.”

However, it would be premature to conclude that we know very little about risk perception in organizational settings. There is a growing body of empirical research and some theoretical approaches, which can be roughly grouped into two categories. The first consists of studies in which the organization is treated as the context where humans encounter risks to themselves. This includes, for instance, studies on accidents and disasters (e.g. Turner 1976, Perrow 1984, Vaughan 1996) and employees’ perspectives on occupational safety and health risks (e.g. Marek *et al.* 1985, Hutter 2001). In the second category are studies in which the organization itself is seen as exposed to risk. This involves, for instance, studies on managerial risk-taking (e.g. MacCrimmon *et al.* 1986, March and Shapira 1987) and risk perception and management in NGOs (e.g. Mohammed 2007, 2010). I will use the term ‘organizational risk’ to refer to risks which directly or indirectly affect an organization’s processes, activities, and objectives.

In the following, I briefly review some empirical findings from studies on occupational safety and health and organizational risk perception in NGOs. In addition, I present the practice-immanent view of risk (Corvellec 2010), a theoretical explanation for how organizational conceptions of risk are formed.

### Occupational health and safety

Research on occupational health and safety has revealed that different perspectives on risk and safety may exist within one and the same organization. Although a few risks might be commonly understood, there are various “safety cultures” (Cox and Flin 1998, Pidgeon 1998) or “worlds of risk” (Marek *et al.* 1985) within organizations. These studies have demonstrated that perceptions of risk are patterned according to one’s location within the organization (Rayner 1986, Hutter and Power 2005), which suggests that different workings contexts give rise to different risk understandings. For instance, Hunter (2001) reported that perceptions of occupational health and safety risks among British Rail employees were consistent with their place in the organization’s hierarchy. In interviews, only respondents in leadership positions mentioned occupational health risks, such as deafness due to prolonged exposure to noise. The rest of the staff focused on occupational safety risks such as accidents.

As noted by Mearns *et al.* (2001), researchers have identified various other factors that account for the existence of differing risk understandings within an organization. These include demographic factors (age, sex, prior professional experiences, profession, occupation, etc.) and situational factors (working environment, production pressure and peers’ influence, etc.). For instance, Marek *et al.* (1985) investigated risk understandings of four occupational groups working on an oil platform in Norway: administrative staff, catering staff, hotel crew, and drillers. The study found that each group perceived risks differently, and that these variations were patterned according to four factors: overall knowledge about operations on an oil platform; current working

conditions and tasks; previous working experiences; and the system of organizational and administrative processes on the platform (Mearns *et al.* 2001).

### Organizational risk perception and NGOs

To my knowledge, the only published study on organizational risk perception in NGOs has been carried out by Kassim M. Mohammed (2007, 2010).

Seeking to demonstrate the connection between risk perception and risk management, Mohammed investigated perceptions of organizational risk among employees of MASH Trust. Based in New Zealand, the organization provides healthcare and support for people with mental, intellectual, and physical disabilities. Rather than focusing on risks to the employees themselves, Mohammed examined what employees perceived as a risk for their organization and what strategies they used in managing those risks. The organization was not only the context, but also the object of perception.

The study involved interviewing 34 employees from different areas and organizational levels. Participants were grouped into three categories according to their hierarchical level: governance (CEO and other top management), managerial (middle management) and staff (employees working directly with clients). Interviewees identified over 35 different types and sources of risk, including risk of reputation loss; risk of lack of financial resource due to reduced number of funders; risk of failure to recruit or retain staff; risk of breaching accreditation or certification standards; risk of inappropriate conduct of employees towards clients; and the risk of clients harming employees.

Observing that variations were more pronounced between groups than within each group, Mohammed argued that perceptions of risk were patterned according to two dimensions: the vertical, which relates to the group position in the organizational hierarchy and scope of responsibilities (top management,

middle management, and workforce); and the horizontal, which refers to participants' functional area (finance, human resources, etc.). For instance, the governance group described risks that could affect the entire organization, whereas the staff group focused on risks directly related to handling clients, and the managerial group was somewhere in-between these two perspectives. Mohammed then concluded that working context is a key determinant of risk perception. Put differently, employees' judgments about risk are informed by their place within the organization, especially in terms of hierarchy and functions.

Despite its original contribution, the study has two important weaknesses. First, Mohammed's analysis neither acknowledges nor takes into account external factors that could influence employee perceptions of organizational risk. On the contrary, the reader is left with the impression that MASH Trust is a closed system that operates in isolation from its surroundings – even though some risks identified by the respondents derived from the organization's interactions with external stakeholders, such as clients, funders or accreditation bodies. Second, Mohammed concludes that working context shapes risk understandings, but he treats MASH Trust's organizational context as a self-evident reality, never questioning why the organization is structured and operates the way it does. If risk perception is a context-dependent phenomenon, risk perception research cannot take context for granted. I offer a broader discussion on these limitations in Chapter 6, in analyzing my own research findings.

### A practice-immanent view of organizational risk

Based on a case study of Skånetrafiken, a regional public transportation authority in Sweden, Corvellec (2010) offers a theoretical explanation of how perceptions of organizational risk are constructed. His analysis builds on practice theory (Nicolini *et al.* 2003, Gherardi 2009) and the assertion that there is no risk unless something valuable is at stake (Rescher 1983, Rosa

---

1998, Aven and Renn 2009). Corvellec suggests that managerial practice determines what is valuable for an organization, and consequently influences what issues are singled out as risks.

For three years, Corvellec investigated risk understandings and risk management practices in Skånetrafiken. The organization provides public transportation services through train and bus contractors in the Skåne region of southern Sweden. Corvellec noticed that managers often mentioned potential threats to the Skånetrafiken's brand and reputation when asked to identify risks. That coincided with the fact that the organization had in recent years been focusing increasingly on establishing a brand name for itself. Corvellec concluded that managers constructed a series of reputational risks because they believed the brand was essential to the operational model, success, and business continuity of the organization. In other words, the brand was seen to be at risk precisely because it was considered important and worth protecting. "Risk is born in the process of attaching value to some object (and not to others)" (2010:147). Had the brand been deemed unimportant, managers would have focused on other risks.

Recognizing that value is never self-evident, Corvellec draws on practice theory to propose that managerial practices influenced what managers considered valuable for Skånetrafiken. "Practice" is here understood as the explicit or implicit ways of organizing and running the organization— routines, procedures, mental schemes, preferences, rules, etc. (2009:298). Corvellec proposes that conceptions of value derive from managerial practice, as it establishes what managers should focus on. Put differently, specific ways of organizing give rise to specific ways of valuing things. In the case of Skånetrafiken, managers attached particular value to the brand because the organization operates exclusively via contractors. Due to this operational model, managers had developed an understanding that what Skånetrafiken



needed was a visible brand to unify its transport operators in the public eye, and increase business.

Given that practice determines value and value shapes risk, Corvellec concludes that organizational risk understandings are contingent on managerial practice. Schematically, [practice]  $\rightarrow$  [value]  $\rightarrow$  [risk]. That is to say, “risk emerges from the political, strategic, and managerial choices that are made, explicitly or not, about how to run the organization” (2010:147). Therefore, if Skånetrafiken had a different operational model, other objects would be seen as valuable, and managers would have perceived other risks.

Despite its innovative approach, Corvellec’s practice-immanent view of risk has three main shortcomings. First, the analysis highlights the role of value in risk assessments, but downplays the role of danger. It is not clear why managers saw certain objects<sup>3</sup> as a source of danger to Skånetrafiken’s brand, but not others. Second, Corvellec bases his entire argument on the concept of practice, without discussing what shapes managerial practice. Third, like Mohammed (2007, 2010), Corvellec does not incorporate the organization’s operating context into his analysis. In Chapter 6, I discuss these limitations, based on the case study of SCN.

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

In setting out on this study, I considered the applicability of dominant theories on risk perception to understand how employees of SCN form judgments about organizational risk. However, I found that neither the psychometric paradigm nor the cultural theory helped in answering the research questions.

---

<sup>3</sup> E.g. overcrowded trains, violence, accidents, delays, poor service performances by contracted personnel.

The psychometric paradigm does not offer a methodological approach that takes into account the situational determinants of risk perception identified in the literature. Psychometric studies tend to treat research subjects as atomized individuals, paying little attention to socio-demographic data about sample groups, which may influence perception (Cutter 1993, Lupton 1999 cited in Wilkinson 2001). Moreover, perceptions of risk captured through questionnaires in controlled settings are necessarily disconnected from the social context (Wilkinson 2001). In addition, psychometric studies do not investigate what participants identify as being at stake (e.g. themselves, their families, the general public), offering a limited picture of risk perception (Sjöberg *et al.* 2004). Finally, using a list of risk issues pre-selected by the researcher could constrain the scope of discussion (Smallman and Smith 2003).

Cultural theory, on the other hand, does provides an analytical framework for mapping variations in risk perception, and places emphasis on the social context. I entertained the possibility of using Douglas' (1978) grid and group framework. However, it soon became clear that the framework could not describe what I was seeing in the data. I could argue that SCN is mix of different worldviews, as cultural theory posits (PERRI 2005:100). But that would not help me to understand why there seemed to be underlying commonalities among apparently distinct examples of risks.

Therefore, to be able to interpret and understand perceptions of organizational risk among SCN's employees, I developed a theoretical framework which combines new institutionalism (Meyer and Rowan 1977, DiMaggio and Powell 1983) and the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011). The relational theory of risk informs the notion of risk underlying this study and serves as a framework for "reverse engineering" examples of risks provided by respondents, revealing the constitutive elements. New institutionalism helps to put the risk issues identified by SCN staff into the

context of a larger system and enables me to investigate how rules, laws, belief systems, conventions, and paradigms widespread in the aid industry influence what issues are framed as organizational risks by respondents.

### **2.2.1 Defining risk**

Attempts to study risk perception must inevitably face the question: “What is risk?” (Slovic 1999). Unfortunately, there is no simple answer. “Risk” is an elusive and much contested term (Power 2004:13) used to convey a wide range of meanings in everyday parlance. Risk is the possibility of future loss or harm. Risk is a danger or a problem. Risk is an opportunity. Risk is something that you take. Risk is something you are exposed to. Also in the academic world, there is no generally accepted definition (Renn 1998, Breakwell 2007, Aven 2011). Researchers debate the very nature of risk and how it should be studied. To simplify a complex discussion, we may say there are three main competing ontological and epistemological perspectives on risk. First, risk is a property of the material world, which can be measured with probability theory and managed. Second, risk is the product of individual intrapsychic processes, which can be investigated through psychological rating scales and statistical methods. Finally, risk is a social construct, subject to context, social structure, values, and belief systems (for a detailed review see Bradbury 1989, Shrader-Frechette 1991, Rosa 1998, Renn 2008a,b, Hansson 2010).

In this study I will use the definition of risk proposed by Åsa Boholm and Hervé Corvellec (2011) in the relational theory of risk, which falls under the third ontological and epistemological perspective above. It provides a useful framework for deconstructing risk issues and examining how risk understandings are constructed. In what follows, I offer a summary of the key tenets and analytical concepts of this theory of risk.

## The relational theory of risk

The relational theory of risk was outlined by Åsa Boholm and Hervé Corvellec in an article published in 2011. However, some key concepts had been discussed in the context of the NRCER project<sup>4</sup> or presented in earlier works (see Boholm 2003, 2008, Corvellec 2010). The theory can be described as an interpretative approach to risk, aimed at explaining “why and how something is considered a risk” (2011:176). It is grounded in three converging theoretical approaches: the concept of risk object, first mentioned by Hilgartner (1992) and further developed by Kendra (2007); the role of value in risk assessments, as suggested by Rescher (1983) and Rosa (1998); and the understanding of risk as culturally situated, originally proposed by Douglas (1985). The relational theory of risk defines risk as

[the] product of situated cognition that establishes a causal and contingent relationship of risk between a risk object and an object at risk so that the risk object is considered, in some way and under certain circumstances, to threaten the value attached to the object at risk. (2011:186).

In simplified terms, when people think or talk about risk they do so by constructing causal and hypothetical relationships between objects. Although the objects involved vary, the same pattern consistently appears: the object “A” (source of harm) could affect negatively the object “B” (something worth protecting). Assume, for instance, that there is a risk that smoking could cause lung cancer. In this example, a relationship is established between smoking (risk object) and the one’s health conditions (object at risk), in which smoking could cause a life-threatening disease.

Like other social constructionist approaches (see Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, Douglas 1985, Hilgartner 1992, Dean 1999, Jasanoff 1999, Lupton

---

<sup>4</sup> Carried out between 2000 and 2001, the Network for Research into the Construction of Environmental Risk (NRCER) involved researchers from the universities of Bordeaux-2, Gothenburg, Lancaster, Naples, and Saragossa who all had been studying the social construction of environmental risks.

1999) the relational theory of risk rejects the view of risk as an objective reality, independent of the perceiver. Instead, the theory emphasizes the importance of context, social structure, values, and belief systems in shaping how people perceive and respond to risks. But what exactly does it mean to say something is “socially constructed”? According to Boghossian (2001:1) it means

to emphasize its dependence on contingent aspects of our social selves. It is to say: This thing could not have existed had we not built it; and we need not have built it at all, at least not in its present form. Had we been a different kind of society, had we had different needs, values, or interests, we might well have built a different kind of thing, or built this one differently.

Therefore, to say that risk is socially constructed is to acknowledge that risk understandings are not self-evident, but the product of social forces. For instance, think about the risk that changes in Earth’s climate triggered by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions could disrupt human societies. If risk were an objective reality waiting ‘out there’ to be identified, climate skeptics should have been convinced by now, given the amount of scientific evidence available. And yet, climate change remains a highly contested topic, due not least to politics and economic interests.

Another essential element of relational theory of risk is the assertion that risk arises from “situated cognition” (Boholm and Corvellec 2011). This socially situated view of risk builds on two ideas. First, the construction of some objects as dangerous and others as valuable reflects the fact that humans make sense of the world by creating categories of objects, beings, places, etc. (Lakoff 1987). This is a dynamic process in which various sources provide continuous feedback, such as personal experiences, second-hand information, science, tradition, and common knowledge (Boholm and Corvellec 2011:185-186). Second, cognition does not take place in a social and cultural vacuum; it is contingent on practical life (Mol 2002). Therefore, understandings of risk cannot be separated from social practices, cultural representations, and the

dynamics of the contexts in which they are created. Risk is a context-dependent phenomenon (Slovic 2000).

The relational theory of risk has three key analytical components: the risk object, the object at risk, and the relationship of risk. As to the first: Risk objects are identified as sources of potential harm and danger, similar to hazards. These objects, however, do not have an objective existence: they are constructed, in the sense that portraying something as ‘risky’ involves stressing certain features of the object, while downplaying others. For this reason, nearly everything can be singled out as a risk object: physical objects, natural phenomena, cultural representations, human behaviors, etc. On the other hand, this construction process is not arbitrary. Pre-existent natural and social conditions shape what is or not defined as dangerous. Given their socially constructed nature, risk objects are always open to reinterpretation. Their identity is not fixed. What constitutes a risk object in one context might not be perceived as such in another. What constitutes a risk object for one person might be perceived as an object at risk by another.

Objects at risk are invested with value, understood here as the relative worth or importance of something. Like risk objects, objects at risk are not self-evident or natural, but socially created. This, implicitly or explicitly, involves a valuation process. Views on what is deemed of value vary widely, so different material and immaterial artifacts can be constructed as objects at risk: human lives, nature, money, freedom, reputation, etc. Objects at risk are continuously being redefined, as what is valuable today may not be valuable tomorrow. Objects at risk are an essential element for understanding why and how relationships of risk are formed, since “there is no risk unless something of value is considered to be at stake” (Corvellec 2010:145).

And thirdly, a relationship of risk is the connection between a risk object and an object at risk, in which the former could harm or affect negatively the latter. The relationship of risk is also a construct: it is not self-evident that the risk

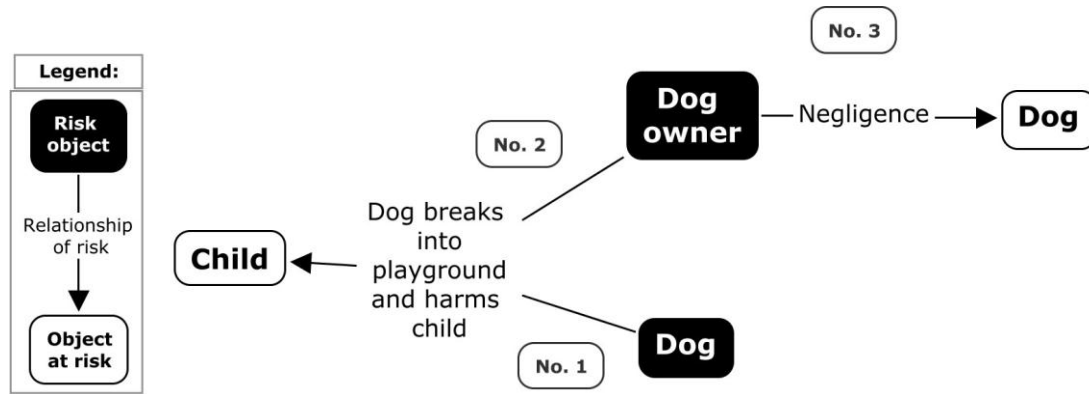
object “A” has the potential to harm, or is going to harm, the object at risk “B”. The relationship is created by the observer, shaped by his or her past experiences, viewpoints, interests, and worries. It reflects how that observer understands the risk object and the object at risk. A relationship of risk can be established by means of probabilities and scientific experiments, or by less sophisticated approaches such as narratives. Therefore, Boholm and Corvellec (2011) suggest that despite using different methods, both experts and lay people construct relationships of risk.

Although these authors take a constructionist approach to risk, they emphasize that relationships of risk are not random. At least three conditions must be met. Firstly, relationships of risk are essentially hypothetical: there must a possibility that the risk object “A” could affect the object at risk “B”, but that event may or may not happen. Secondly, relationships of risk are causal: a cause–effect connection must be established between two objects, in which the risk object “A” is perceived as having a particular effect on the object at risk “B” that will take place under certain circumstances. This causal link subsumes an understanding of who is to be blamed for the undesirable outcome (Douglas 1992). And thirdly, relationships of risk are linked or lead to action, as risk itself embodies the desire to act in the face of uncertainty (Bernstein 1996).

To illustrate their argument, Boholm and Corvellec (2011) provide a simple example (see Figure 2): the risk that a dog could break into a children’s playground and harm a child (No.1). In this case, the dog is constructed as a risk object, embodying a potential source of danger, while the child is constructed as the valuable object at risk, whose life and well-being is worth protecting. However, given the fluid identity of risk objects and objects at risk (Bauman 2005), two other interpretations are possible. First, the dog owner is the primary risk object, since he or she should have ensured the dog was trained to avoid inflicting harm (No. 2). Second, a negligent owner is a

potential source of harm for the dog itself, from an animal rights perspective (No.3). We see that different relationships of risk can be constructed involving dog, child, and dog owner.

*Figure 2: Risk as a relationship*



*Source: adapted from Boholm and Corvellec (2011)*

This example also illustrates that three components of the relational theory of risk (risk object, object at risk, and relationship of risk) are constructed at the same time. In other words, dog, child, or dog owner are not intrinsically risk objects or objects at risk: they are given their roles in the play at the same time as the plot is conceived. Therefore, “(...) any single phenomenon can simultaneously be regarded as a risk object, as an object at risk, or as having nothing to do with risk, by observers operating under different assumptions” (Boholm and Corvellec 2011:179).

## 2.2.2 Understanding organizations

Researching organizational risk perception requires a theory-based understanding of organizational structure and behavior. This thesis draws on the analytical lenses of the so-called “new institutionalism in organizational analysis”, hereafter referred as new institutional theory or new institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). This theory was selected for two main reasons. Firstly, the emphasis of new institutionalism on relations between organizations and their environment allows researchers to take the analysis



from the micro to the macro level. This is particularly relevant for the objectives of this study, since earlier work on organizational risk perception in NGOs has focused primarily on situational factors (Mohammed 2007, 2010). Secondly, some researchers have suggested that new institutional theory could advance our understanding of risk in organizations (Lane and Quack 1999, Power 2004, 2009, Lim 2012). Lane and Quack (1999), for instance, have shown how state policies and institutionalized norms accounted for differences in risk taking and risk management in German and British banks. In the following, I provide an overview of new institutionalism, and its application to NGOs.

### New institutionalism

Formulated by Meyer and Rowan (1977), Zucker (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and Meyer and Scott (1983), the new institutionalism posits that organizations are deeply embedded in wider societal contexts— or “organizational fields”— which influence their structure and behavior (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Based on Bourdieu (Powell 2007), the concept of organizational field describes a community of various social actors united around a central issue – oil and gas, international development cooperation, renewable energy, etc. These actors may include suppliers, consumers, professional associations, consultants, regulatory agencies, competitors, and others (Krücken and Hasse 2007, Powell 2007). However, organizational fields are more than just a cluster of organizations. They are “socially constructed normative world[s]” (Lister 2003:178), with their own rules, laws, belief systems, mental models, conventions, rational myths<sup>5</sup>, and paradigms (Suchman 1995).

---

<sup>5</sup> Myths of “best practice,” which are based on the assumption that they are rationally effective (Meyer and Rowan 1977)

---

Another central concept in new institutional theory is *legitimacy* (Deephouse and Suchman 2008). Highlighting its socially constructed nature, Suchman (1995:574) defines legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within (...) [the] system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions [of a social group].” This aura of propriety and credibility allows organizations to say what they say and do what they do (Edwards 1999 cited in Kuroda and Imata 2003:1-2). Legitimacy helps organizations to improve access to scarce resources, secure support from their constituencies, enhance stability, and increase chances of success and survival (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Suchman 1995, Deephouse and Suchman 2008).

An organization can actively seek the endorsement of other field-members (Suchman 1995), but its legitimacy (or lack thereof) will depend on how these stakeholders perceive the organization (Deephouse and Carter 2005). Consequently, the more an organization depends on the active and long-term engagement of its stakeholders, the higher its need for legitimacy (DiMaggio 1988 cited in Suchman 1995). In this sense, legitimacy resembles the concept of reputation, as both involve an external evaluation of the organization (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990, Fombrun and Shanley 1990). According to Deephouse and Carter (2005), several authors have noted the conceptual overlapping between these concepts (e.g. Ashforth and Gibbs 1990, Fombrun and Shanley 1990, Galaskiewicz 1985, Oliver 1990, Stuart 2000, Hall 1992, Suchman 1995). For instance, both reputation and legitimacy improve an organization’s access to external resources (Hall 1992, Suchman 1995). Moreover, they have similar “sources,” such as regulatory compliance and charitable giving (Oliver 1990, Stuart 2000). In this thesis, reputation and legitimacy are treated as synonyms.

According to Suchman (1995:587), organizations can adopt three different types of legitimacy-seeking strategies: they may conform to legitimating criteria in their field; change the rules of the game; or seek another field.

However, Suchman argues that managers often see conformity as the easiest approach. As a result, the pursuit of legitimacy is a driving force behind organizational structure and behavior (Nee 2003). To be endorsed by their field-members (Deephouse 1996), organizations tend to incorporate structures and practices to conform to the rules of the game (Meyer and Rowan 1977). This process, called “isomorphism”, explains why organizations in certain industries become increasingly similar over time (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Although isomorphism builds legitimacy, it also creates problems for organizations. They may, for instance, adopt practices or procedures that are counter-productive. This often leads to a gap between formal structure and practices, known as “decoupling” (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Additionally, there may be conflicting rules, laws, conventions and paradigms within a single organizational field, depending on the number of stakeholder groups involved. In this case, organizations may be forced to adopt incompatible practices, as they seek the endorsement of different social actors (Liu 2011:146). Since legitimacy is established per stakeholder group (Deephouse 1996, Lister 2003, Lim 2012), securing the support of one group may even jeopardize the organization’s legitimacy with another (Lim 2012).

Organizations face not only multiple legitimating audiences, but multiple legitimacy criteria. Researchers have identified several dimensions of legitimacy (Aldrich and Fiol 1994, Stryker 1994, Scott 1995, Suchman 1995). The typology proposed by W. Richard Scott (1995) is particularly relevant for the purposes of this study. He identifies three types of legitimacy: regulatory, normative, and cognitive. *Regulatory* legitimacy is concerned with laws and norms imposed upon the organization, as well as self-regulatory mechanisms. This dimension is mostly associated with third parties, such as the state, which are invested with power to apply sanctions against those who fail to conform. Consequently, organizations gain regulatory legitimacy by complying with the existing regulations in their organizational fields. *Normative* legitimacy refers

to ideals, moral obligations and ideas about appropriated behavior which organizations are expected to follow. Organizations attain normative legitimacy by conforming to the social and moral conventions of their organizational fields. And thirdly, *cognitive* legitimacy refers to taken-for-granted assumptions, mental models and rational myths, which are translated into routines, practices and procedures. This dimension acknowledges that organizations “are not so much bundles of regulations or collections of norms, but knowledge systems” (Scott 1995:xviii). Therefore, organizations gain cognitive legitimacy by operating under the same reference frame as the rest of their organizational field (ibid.).

Scott’s typology should be seen as an analytical device. In real life, different types of legitimacy tend to merge with one another (Brinkerhoff 2005, Deephouse and Suchman 2008). Furthermore, stakeholders may apply all dimensions or a combination of them to judge whether or not an organization is legitimate (Ruef and Scott 1998 cited in Patel *et al.* 2005). Stakeholders may also favor one particular dimension of legitimacy over another (Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008:41). Consequently, gaining legitimacy in one dimension may risk the organization’s legitimacy in another (Scott 1995, Suchman 1995, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008).

Although the new institutionalism has advanced our understanding of organization-environment relations, the theory has not escaped criticism. A common viewpoint is that institutional theorists tend to downplay organizational resistance, agency and self-interest (DiMaggio 1988, Oliver 1991, Fligstein 2001). Seeking to overcome this gap, scholars have shown that organizations not only resist and maneuver around isomorphic pressures (Oliver 1991), but create new institutional arrangements themselves (DiMaggio 1988). For instance, Oliver (1991) has showed that organizations employ a variety of strategies and tactics to deal with institutional pressures,

from acquiesce (e.g. following invisible, taken-for-granted norms) to manipulation (e.g. shaping values and criteria).

### NGOs and the pursuit of legitimacy

NGOs are embedded in an organizational field: the international aid system. This field consists of a wide range of social actors involved in helping and assisting what has become known as “the South” (Tvedt 2006:681), and includes NGOs, INGOs, national development agencies, UN agencies, private and public donors, government agencies in developing countries, beneficiaries, and research institutions (Campion 2002). As Apthorpe (2011:199) reminds us, the international aid system, or “Aidland,” is a socially constructed world:

Aidland has its own mental topographies, languages of discourse, lore and custom, and approaches to organizational knowledge and learning (...) [I]t generates and sustains to an extent its own politics and economics, geographics, demographics and other -ics (...) It even has its own handed-down secular-inspirational sort of ‘ten commandments’, the ‘thou shalt’ UN Millennium Development Goals.

Several studies have shown that NGOs are driven to adopt structures and practices that conform to dominant discourses on development in Aidland. An example of this isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) is NGOs’ pervasive adoption of paper-based planning and reporting practices, despite their questionable effectiveness (Rauh 2010).

Although few studies of NGOs use new institutionalism in a substantive way, there has been increasing interest in the topic of NGO legitimacy (Kuroda and Imata 2003). The concept has been applied to understand the internal dynamics of NGOs (Sauder 2002, Hilhorst 2003, Lister 2003, Goddard and Assad 2006, Hilhorst 2007, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008) and to examine issues of representativeness in advocacy work (Atack 1999, Hudson 2000, Kuroda and Imata 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006). In line with new institutional theory, researchers see legitimacy as essential for the success and survival of NGOs. Being perceived as reliable, trustworthy, and capable enables an NGO to

---

compete for scarce donor funds (Atack 1999, Nee 2003, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008) and to improve its efficiency in advocacy work (Hudson 2000, Pearce 1997 cited in Lister 2003).

Acquiring legitimacy is not an easy task (Hilhorst 2007). NGOs face multiple legitimacy criteria and legitimating audiences (donors, host governments, beneficiaries, the general public in their home country, etc.) (Lister 2003). As noted by Ossewaarde *et al.* (2008:49), tensions between different types of legitimacy and stakeholders' different priorities may conflict with one another, putting NGO legitimacy at risk. In a sense, actions to meet one legitimacy criterion may hinder the organization's capacity to meet another.

Researchers dealing with NGOs and development studies have identified five main criteria or "sources" of NGO legitimacy, which reflect rules, laws, belief systems, conventions, rational myths, and paradigms widespread in the aid industry (after Lister 2003):

1. the moral character of NGOs' mission, including level of correlation between professed values and practices (Saxby 1996, Edwards 1999, Atack 1999, Edwards and Zadek 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008);
2. legal compliance (Edwards 1999, Edwards and Zadek 2003, Lister 2003, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008);
3. accountability and good governance (Edwards and Hulme 1995, Saxby 1996, Atack 1999, Lister 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008);
4. performance, efficiency, and technical expertise (Saxby 1996, Eade 1997, Fowler 1997, Pearce 1997, Atack 1999, Brown 2001, Edwards and Zadek 2003, Lister 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008);

5. experience in the South and partnership with Southern NGOs (Lister 2001, Lister 2003, Brehm 2001 cited in Rauh 2010).

Another source of NGO legitimacy is representativeness (Eade 1997, Pearce 1997, Attack 1999, Hudson 2000, Edwards and Zadek 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006). However, there seems to be confusion between how NGOs obtain legitimacy and what they achieve by being perceived as credible development actors. In this thesis, representativeness is understood as a consequence, not a source, of NGO legitimacy. Put differently, the representativeness of an NGO as “advocate of the poor” derives from its legitimacy as organization.

These five sources of NGO legitimacy “form a composite of institutional pressures that create descriptions of reality for [an] organization: explanations of what is and what is not, what can be acted on and what cannot” (Hoffman 2001:136). With some overlapping, they can be classified using Scott’s (1995) dimensions, as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1: Dimensions and sources of NGO legitimacy*

<b>Legitimacy</b>	
<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Sources of NGO legitimacy</b>
Normative	(1) Moral character of an NGO’s mission, including level of correlation between professed values and practices
Regulatory	(2) Legal compliance (3) Accountability and good governance
Cognitive	(3) Accountability and good governance (4) Performance, efficiency and technical expertise (5) Experience in the South and links with Southern NGOs

Several researchers have suggested that NGO legitimacy stems from the *moral character of their mission*. For instance, Hilhorst (2003:7) notes that the term NGO has a moral component. As a label, it conveys that the organization is “doing good for the development of others” for reasons other than profit or politics. Who could argue that alleviating hunger and poverty, promoting children’s rights, or saving the environment are not morally right or worth

---

fighting for? Although congruence with “universal” values and ideals is a powerful source of legitimacy to NGOs, it also requires organizations to live up to their professed values. When an NGO fails to demonstrate that its actions and practices are in line with its self-proclaimed values and working principles, its normative legitimacy is jeopardized. For instance, an humanitarian NGO that claims to provide aid on the basis of need could be criticized if it selects beneficiaries on the basis of access or political reasons (Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008).

Another source of NGO legitimacy is *legal compliance*. In most countries, NGO activity is governed by a legal framework which regulates their tax regime, access to foreign funding, registration as formal legal entities, amount of funds destined to the organization’s mission, etc. Organizations that fail to comply with NGO legislation in their home and host countries can suffer a range of sanctions, from financial penalties to having their activities criminalized (ICNL 2009a). Legal compliance also includes requirements imposed by donors in exchange for funding (conducting audits, submitting reports, etc.) as well as such self-regulatory mechanisms as the INGO Accountability Charter<sup>6</sup> and the People in Aid Code of Good Practice<sup>7</sup>.

Seen as an essential tool for NGOs to attract funds and fulfill their missions (Edwards and Hulme 1995), *accountability* is another aspect of NGO legitimacy particularly emphasized in the literature. According to Lewis (2001:144), confronting concerns about accountability “may be the key to the survival of the NGO movement.” Roughly put, NGO accountability involves transparency in the management of funds; openness about the organization’s structures, mission, policies, and activities; and reporting on financial performance, achievements and failures in an open and accurate manner

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ingoaccountabilitycharter.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/code/code-en.pdf>



(Wallace 1997 cited in Sauder 2002, INGO Accountability Charter 2012). NGO accountability extends up the aid chain, towards donors, as well as downwards, towards beneficiaries (Bornstein 2003 cited in Rauh 2010). In practice, however, NGOs tend to prioritize donor demands for accountability (Rauh 2010).

Accountability is a source of both cognitive and regulatory legitimacy. Conformity to recognized accountability practices demonstrates that an NGO shares the same frame of reference (Scott 2001) with the rest of the aid industry. From a case study of accounting practices in three Tanzanian NGOs, Goddard and Assaud (2006) concluded that the perceived adequacy of accounting practices (or lack thereof) served as a symbol of their ability to manage funds, acting as a “legitimizing tool” for these organizations. The idea of NGO accountability not only appears uncontestable across different stakeholders (Jordan and Tuijl 2006), but is enforced through norms and sanction. NGOs that fail to conform to donor accountability requirements (be it reporting requirements, audit, etc.), risk being blacklisted and face shortage of funding.

Performance and efficiency is a further aspect of NGO legitimacy closely linked to accountability. It seems that the entire aid industry has become obsessed with aid effectiveness. For instance, the World Bank stated in a recent brochure for its Program-for-Results that “[i]n today’s world, development is about results” (2011:2). The emphasis on measurable, quantitative, and short-term results can be seen as a response to those who claim that foreign aid does not work and might even worsen the situation of developing countries. The aid industry thus seeks to prove itself by advocating performance indicators, tangible results, and value for money (Marcus 2012:55). Being part of the “game,” NGOs also are affected by this “Results Obsession Disorder” (ibid.). They are increasingly required by donors and the general public to demonstrate that their projects and programs actually produce

---

results. It has become common practice among donors to evaluate the performance of NGOs to determine whether or not they should continue to support their activities (Jordan and Tuijl 2006). Additionally, being shown to deliver on results gives NGOs greater credibility for engaging in advocacy and policy lobbying (Atack 1999).

NGO efficiency is often measured in terms of overhead ratio: the percentage of overall revenue spent on administration and fund-raising costs, as opposed to program expenses (Hermann *et al.* 2010). Donors and the general public assume that an efficient NGO will channel most of its budget to the beneficiaries (Lewis 2001). The lower the overheads, the more funds reach beneficiaries. Another measure of efficiency is Value for Money, which is achieved when an NGO maximizes the positive impacts on beneficiaries while minimizing the costs of its development interventions. This concept has become increasingly popular among DAC donors<sup>8</sup>. For instance, in late 2010 Andrew Mitchell, the UK Secretary of State for International Development, stated:

UK Government support for aid organisations will be targeted at those agencies which demonstrate they can deliver best Value for Money while they improve the health, education and welfare of millions of people in the poorest countries (DFID 2010, cited in Nordtveit 2012:57).

The last key element of NGO legitimacy is experience in the South and partnership with Southern NGOs, which applies especially to INGOs. Ties with the South create the impression that an INGO understands what is happening on the ground, which gives it the legitimacy to conduct advocacy (Hudson 2000) and seek donor funding. In a study of consultation practices among British NGOs in Guatemala, Lister (2001) found evidence that local

---

<sup>8</sup> The DAC has 24 members: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States.

partners were part of a “legitimizing vocabulary,” especially among head office staff. The assumed wishes of partners were often used to justify organizations’ plans and actions. This is not without reason. Following the widely acknowledged failure of donor-driven and project-based interventionist approaches (OECD-DAC 1996:7 cited in Oaxaca 2006), partnership and developing local capacity have become the general rule in the development community since the late 1990s. Nevertheless, several researchers have shown that this partnership rhetoric may translate poorly into practice, with asymmetric relations and subtle uses of power (see Crewe and Harrison 1999, Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003).

### **3. SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY (SCN)**

Building the imaginary world where a story takes place is a key task for writers of science fiction and fantasy, as it helps the reader to understand the characters, their motivations and actions. When it comes to case studies, this is not as different as might be thought. Despite their non-fictional purposes, researchers must also introduce the reader to the socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966) where a case study takes place. How would it be possible, for instance, to investigate perceptions of organizational risk among SCN employees, without understanding the context where these people encounter risk and make judgments about it? This chapter offers an introduction to the world of SCN, setting the stage for the ensuing study of organizational risk perception.

The first section of the chapter provides a general overview of SCN. The second presents the restructuring process underway in SCN when fieldwork was conducted. The third briefly outlines the organization's legal and regulatory environment, and the fourth section describes SCN's organizational structure and governance model for international programs as of December 2011.

#### **3.1 SCN at a glance**

Save the Children Norway is an international non-governmental child rights organization, with no religious or political affiliations. It was established in 1946 to provide support for children affected by the Second World War in Norway and other European countries (Larsen 2006). SCN is a leading member of Save the Children (SC), one of the world's largest umbrella organizations focusing on children. SC consists of 30 national organizations with operations in 120 countries and combined revenues of USD 1.6 billion

---

(SCI 2012). With total revenues of NOK 625 million in 2011 (SCN 2012a,b), SCN is the fourth largest member of SC (SCI 2012) and one of the five largest NGOs in Norway.

Guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Declaration on Human Rights, SCN works to promote children's rights and to improve living conditions of vulnerable children worldwide. As a dual-mandate organization, SCN engages in humanitarian and long-term development work. The organization follows a rights-based approach and focuses on seven thematic areas: education, emergencies, child protection, health, nutrition, child rights governance, prevention of HIV/AIDS, and support to affected children. In 2011, SCN reached about 5.5 million children in 29 countries<sup>9</sup> in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, in addition to Norway (SCN 2012a,b). In 12 of these countries<sup>10</sup>, SCN was present through a local office, referred to as "country office" or "country program." In the remaining countries SCN provided funds or technical expertise to programs run by other SC organizations

In 2009, SCN adopted a new vision, mission, and set of values, which are shared by all SC national organizations. Its working principles remained unaltered (see Table 2).

---

<sup>9</sup> In Africa: Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In Asia: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, in addition the occupied areas of Palestine. In Europe: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Romania, and Russia. In Latin America: the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

<sup>10</sup> In Africa: Ethiopia, Zambia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. In Asia: Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, and Nepal. In Europe: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Russia. In Latin-America: Nicaragua.

*Table 2: SCN's mission, vision, values, and working principles*

<b>Mission</b>	To inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.
<b>Vision</b>	A world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.
<b>Values</b>	<p>1. Accountability: We take personal responsibility for using our resources efficiently, achieving measurable results, and being accountable to supporters, partners and, most of all, children.</p> <p>2. Ambition: We place demands on ourselves and our colleagues, set high goals, and are committed to improving the quality of everything we do for children.</p> <p>3. Collaboration: We respect and value each other, thrive on our diversity, and work with partners to leverage our global strength in making a difference for children.</p> <p>4. Creativity: We are open to new ideas, embrace change, and take disciplined risks to develop sustainable solutions for and with children.</p> <p>5. Integrity: We aspire to live up to the highest standards of personal honesty and behavior; we never compromise our reputation and always act in the best interests of children.</p>
<b>Working principles</b>	<p>1. We support children's participation, and identify who has responsibility for fulfilling children's rights.</p> <p>2. We build local and national capacity.</p> <p>3. We actively engage in political advocacy to influence policies that can achieve sustainable change for large numbers of children.</p> <p>4. We deliver measurable and sustainable results for children, and we keep our promises.</p> <p>5. We are innovative and reach out to many children;</p>

Source: SCN (2009:2,5)

SCN depends primarily on external sources of income such as grants and donations. In 2011, the organization obtained 37 percent of its revenues from individual donors, 30 percent from the Norwegian government, and 33 percent from other sources<sup>11</sup> (SCN 2012a,b). The collaboration with the Norwegian government dates back to the late 1960s (Kruse *et al.* 2009). In 2009, SCN signed a five-year core funding agreement of nearly NOK 750 million with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) for the period 2010–2014 (Norad 2010:9). Other sources of Norwegian state funding include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and embassies in the countries where SCN has operations.

At the time of my fieldwork, SCN was undergoing a major restructuring process. Seeking to become more efficient and influential, the umbrella organization SC was moving from being a loose confederation of national organizations to become a federation with strong centralized authority (Jayawickrama 2012). This is the most recent chapter in a lengthy unification process among SC national organizations that has introduced significant changes in how SCN operates internationally.

## 3.2 Unification

Save the Children (SC) was founded in the United Kingdom, in 1919, and was later followed by similar organizations in other countries. For decades, SC was a loose confederation of autonomous members, formerly known as the International Save the Children Alliance (“the Alliance”). Although united by a common objective and name, SC organizations have operated independently for most of their history. There were, for instance, five member organizations operating in Uganda, with different country offices, staff and program

---

<sup>11</sup> For example, SC national organizations and European Union grants.

priorities. Since the late 1990s, SC organizations have been slowly coming together as one, in what is referred to as the *Unification process* in this thesis.

Although member organizations have been working to improve cooperation in emergencies since 1997, the Unification process officially started in 2004, when the Alliance adopted a common set of challenges for the period 2005–2010. One of these challenges was to merge operations in developing countries where more than one SC organization was present. Launched in 2004, the Unified Presence initiative aimed at strengthening SC's presence at the country level, reducing costs and enhancing efficiency. The initiative introduced a shared-governance system, in which only one member runs all SC's operations in the country, with funding and strategic directions provided by others. As an organizational review of SCN commissioned by Norad rightly noted: “[the] arrangement appears as a pragmatic compromise in which a small group of SC members (donors) have divided up the world and decided who should manage what country [office]” (Kruse *et al.* 2009:15).

The Unified Presence created a need to establish common work processes across SC organizations, which in turn led to the Core Processes Harmonization (CPH) initiative. Cross-member steering groups were established to assess members' administrative systems and to design harmonized processes for unified country offices. Several guidelines have been introduced since 2009, including financial management, planning and reporting, safety and security, grant management, and monitoring/ evaluation. To reduce the managerial complexity created by the Unification, SCN has adopted all CPH guidelines and SC's policies across all country offices, regardless of their stage in the Unification process.

The Unification reached a crucial stage in November 2009, when all SC organizations adopted a new global strategy for 2010–2015. Among other things, the document introduced a new global governance system. The Alliance's relatively small secretariat was replaced by a stronger central entity,



---

Save the Children International (SCI). Based in London, SCI is accountable to all members via a newly appointed CEO and international board of directors. The new strategy brought a new global operating model for delivering international programs and advocacy for children. Members agreed to transfer the management of all international development and emergency operations to SCI's International Programs Unit (IPU). Consequently, SCI is to assume the operational management of all country offices previously run by member organizations, overseeing a budget of nearly a USD 1 billion (Jayawickrama 2012). The rationale for such a drastic transformation was threefold. First, the merger would improve efficiency by harmonizing administrative systems across country offices. Second, the new programming set-up would reduce SC's overall administrative costs by approximately 30 percent (as of November 2009). Third, SC would become a stronger global player, with more resources and influence (Save the Children 2009).

Although member organizations will remain in charge of operations in their home countries, the so-called "transition to SCI" will drastically change their relationship with country offices. SCN and other SC national organizations will move from being managers to become shareholders. They will "put the money in," but will not run international programs or projects. Under this new operational model, member organizations will focus on resource mobilization and constituency building in their home countries, while providing strategic directions and technical expertise to country offices.

Initiated in 2011, the merger of all SC's international programs is to be completed by 2013. In the meantime, member organizations must juggle with different governance systems in order to operate internationally. For instance, SCN directly supported 11 country offices in 2011: three country offices that have been recently transferred to SCI (Cambodia, Laos, and Nepal/Bhutan); four country offices that have been unified under the leadership of SCN (Albania, Nicaragua, Uganda, and Zimbabwe); and four non-unified country

---

offices that remained exclusively under SCN management (Ethiopia, Russia, South East Europe<sup>12</sup>, and Zambia).

### 3.3 Legal and regulatory environment

To understand SCN's structure and management, it is important to discuss some aspects of its operating environment. As an INGO, SCN is obliged to follow the local laws and regulations in all countries where it operates. This will vary from country to country, and may include income/profit tax exemptions; the tax treatment of income from economic activities; applicability of Value Added Tax (VAT) and taxes on property; income taxes for national and international staff ; staff employment, work permits, fringe benefits, employee tax withholdings and other compensations; currency exchange regulations; registration with national governmental agencies; transferences of international funding, to mention some of the most usual areas (ICNL 2009a,b).

Another form of regulatory power exerted over SCN involves public donors, such as Norad or the MFA. In entering into a funding agreement with these donors, SCN must make a compromise to satisfy their requirements. For instance, the Norwegian government regulates financial support provided to NGOs in various ways. Recipient organizations are required to submit annual progress and financial reports, and present independently audited financial statements for the entire organization as well as the specific project(s) supported by Norwegian state funds (Norad 2006).

In addition, the Norwegian government introduced in 2006 a zero-tolerance policy on corruption in development cooperation. According to this policy:

the grant recipient is obliged to organise its operation and activities in such a way that corruption, misuse of funds and financial irregularities

---

<sup>12</sup> Covering three countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro

are effectively countered through the entire organisation down to the end user (Norad 2011:5).

Any suspicion of financial irregularities must be immediately communicated to the MFA's Foreign Service Control Unit for investigation. Until the case is closed, further transfers of funding to the grant recipient are put on hold. If evidence of fraud or corruption is documented, funds must be reimbursed to the Norwegian government (*ibid.*).

### 3.4 SCN's structure and management

As a membership-based NGO, SCN is open to any person who supports the organization's objectives. Individual members<sup>13</sup> participate in the decision-making process through the National Congress, the highest authority of SCN. The organization has other two governing bodies: the Council of Representatives, which serves as an advisory body and exercises supervision over certain matters; and the Board of Directors, which provides strategic direction to SCN's operations (see Figure 3). The organization is headed by a General Secretary, who is accountable to the board.

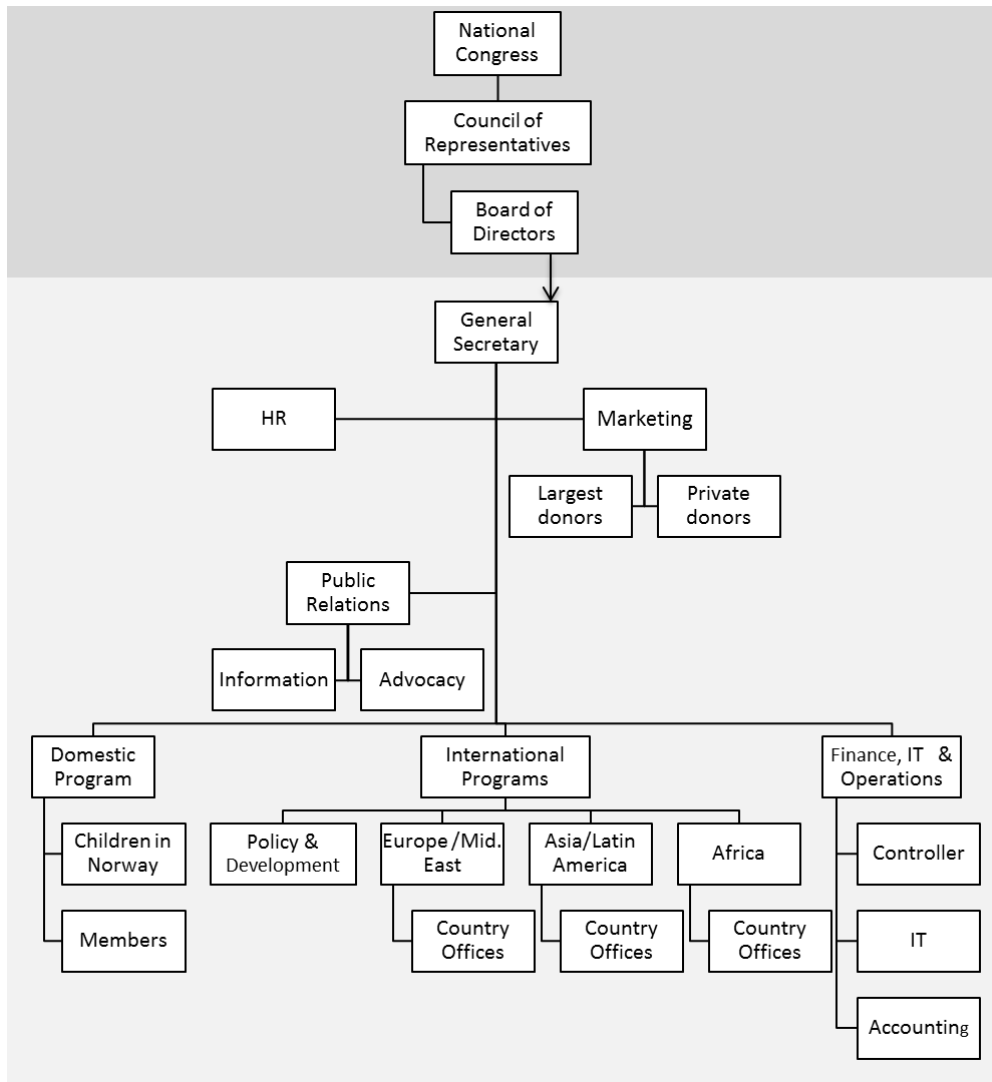
SCN's head office in Oslo has a relatively flat organizational structure. As of November 2011, there were 114 employees (SCN 2012b) divided into six departments: Human Resources; Marketing; Public Relations; Finance, Information Technology (IT) and Operations; Domestic Programs and International Programs (see Figure 3). The Domestic Programs Department coordinates projects and activities implemented in Norway. The International Programs Department oversees operations abroad, which include four main tasks: supervision of country offices directly managed by the organization; monitoring programs funded by SCN and implemented with other SC

---

<sup>13</sup> Individual members are Norwegian citizens or foreigners living in Norway who pay an annual fee (NOK 200–NOK 250). They are encouraged to volunteer for projects and activities implemented by SCN in Norway.

organizations; providing technical support in thematic areas; and grants management. Changes in SCN's organizational structure were expected to take place early in 2012, as more and more country offices were to be transferred to the management of SCI.

*Figure 3: SCN's organizational structure (as of November 2011)*

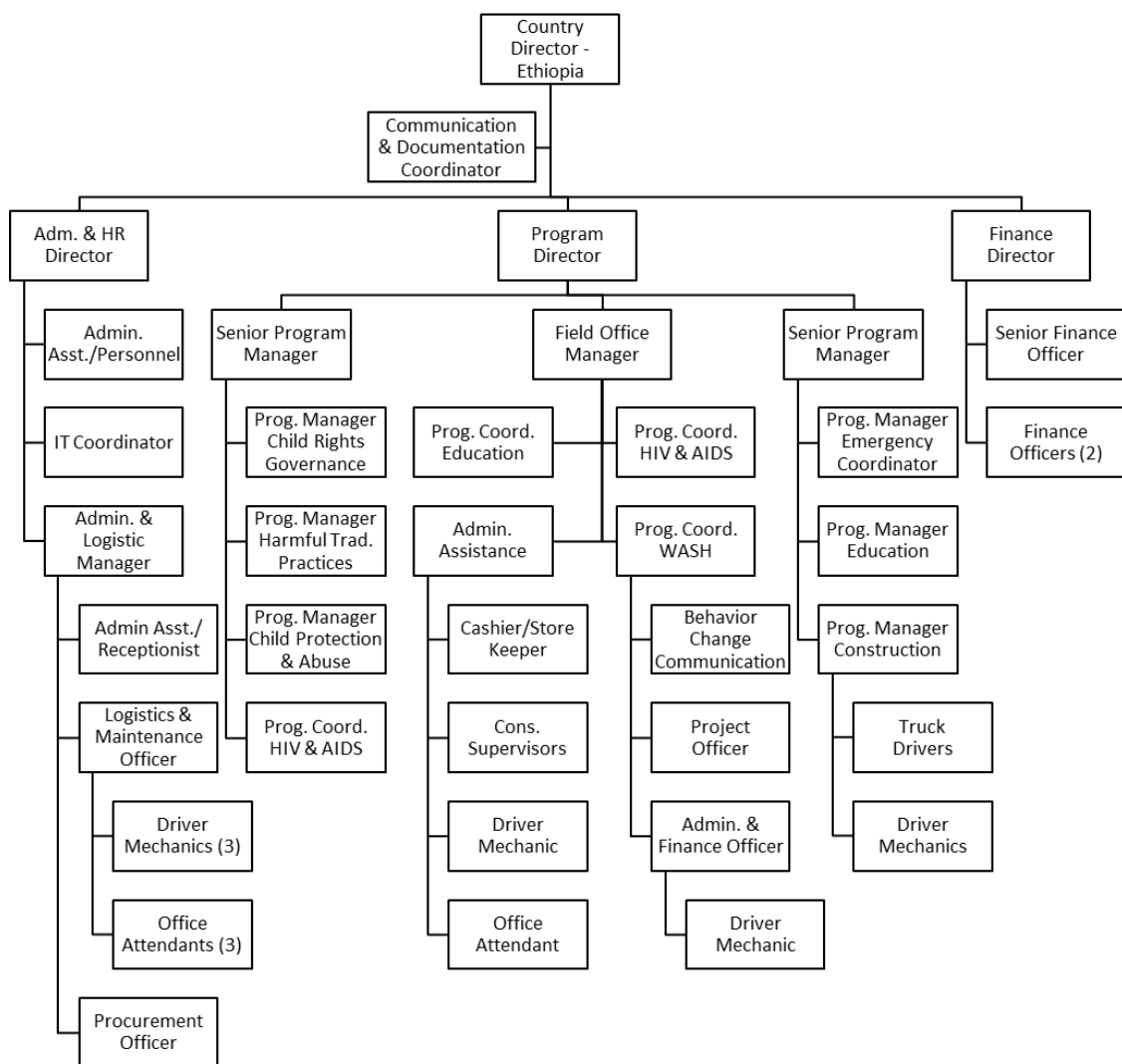


*Source: SCN (2011) - translated by the author from original in Norwegian*

Country offices are to some extent organizations in their own right (see Figure 4). They vary in number of employees, projects implemented and partners, as well as annual budget size, program priorities, operating context, and management practices. In 2011, for instance, the country office in Uganda had about 134 employees while the country office in Russia had only nine. On the

other hand, some characteristics are common to all country offices. All offices are headed by a country director, who reports to SCN or SCI, depending on the governance scheme. Moreover, most staff members are hired locally, although some country offices have expats from SCN or other SC national organizations in leadership positions. Despite their fund-raising efforts, all country offices depend on funding channeled by SCN and other SC members.

*Figure 4: Organizational chart – Country Office Ethiopia (as of September 2010)*



Source: SCN (2010a:22)

We now turn to some key aspects of SCN's management practices in international development and humanitarian work. This review will not include the organization's operations in its home country, Norway.

### 3.4.1 Emphasis on measurable results

To ensure that its programs have an impact in improving the lives of vulnerable children, SCN has a comprehensive system for planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The process begins with the development of SCN's strategy and country offices' strategy plans, which takes place every four to five. Developed in a participatory manner, these documents set out the overall goals, choice of thematic areas (education, child protection, etc.), and geographical presence at the international and national levels.

On the basis of these strategy papers, each country office then develops an annual plan, which is a summary of objectives, results, indicators, activities, and budget planned for the coming year. The information is consolidated in a Logical Framework Matrix (or Logframe), a popular paper-based planning tool among donors and NGOs in the USA and Europe (Rauh 2010). All expected results are accompanied with indicators for monitoring and evaluation against a baseline (see Table 3). In addition, country offices develop plans for thematic areas and projects to assist in the implementation of day-to-day activities.

*Table 3: Measurable results*

<b>Planned Objective</b>	<b>Expected results</b>	<b>Quantifiable results indicators (outcome level)</b>
2.2: Increased number of children of school age who are currently not attending school, especially girls, gaining access to education and gainful vocational training	Result 2.1: Increased enrolment of children primary and basic education.	2.1.1: Net enrolment rate increased by 4%
		2.1.2: 171 out-of-school children enrolled in Alternative Education Program (AEP).
		2.1.2.1: 80% (140 out of 171) of AEP children enrolled in schools.
		2.1.3: 963 Children with disabilities enrolled in schools in SC program areas.

*Source: Country Office Nepal – Annual Plan 2011 (SCN 2010b:11)*

SCN follows up on the implementation of country annual plans through formal and informal mechanisms. Country offices are required to submit quarterly and annual reports on activities conducted, results achieved, and disbursement of funds. These reports provide information on changes in the country context, management issues, the degree of achievement of results, and any deviations from the annual plan. The country annual report reviews the objectives and results achieved over the course of the year, including the total number of children reached through projects and programs. This allows SCN to calculate and publicize its total reach. This formal monitoring system is supplemented by daily communication between head office and country office staff, as well as visits to country offices.

In addition, SCN carries out program and administrative reviews and evaluations of its work. The first type of review aims at asserting the impact, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of development and humanitarian interventions; while the second investigates whether country offices have adequate management systems. Evaluation responsibilities are shared between Oslo and the country offices. The head office focuses on strategic-level evaluations, such as evaluations of country office strategy or global evaluations of thematic areas. Country offices concentrate on project-based reviews and evaluations. In practice, the actual evaluation work is normally carried out by consultants engaged for that purpose.

In country offices directly managed by SCN, the head office approves strategies, annual plans, quarterly and annual reports. In unified country offices under the leadership of SCN, other SC organizations participate in this process to the extent they are financially involved (whether supporting the entire country office, or only some projects). With the transition to SCI, the official approval process is to be transferred to the IPU. However, members will still approve how their funds are to be used and will receive information that meets the requirements set by their donors.

SCN's planning, monitoring, and evaluation system is designed to match the reporting requirements of its donors, Norad in particular. To obtain its current five-year cooperation agreement with the Norwegian government, SCN had to provide a five-year plan that was based on the country offices' strategies. In addition, SCN must annually submit a concise report on results achieved, to be based on the annual report from the country offices. At the end of the agreement period, the organization will be required to submit to Norad a comprehensive report on the impact of its activities in advancing children's rights against results promised.

### **3.4.2 Working with partners**

Since the 1980s, SCN has gradually moved from self-implementation towards working through local partners (Kruse *et al.* 2009). Today, partnership is one of the organization's key working principles. According to SCN's Policy for Strengthening Local Capacity (2007b:1),

[this] reflects the acknowledgement that international NGOs can provide only limited contributions to the humanitarian challenges in our times. Sustained impact can only be achieved when national and local government and local people take responsibility for their own future.

In most country offices, projects are generally implemented through local partners, which may include national and local governmental agencies (the Ministry of Education, human rights institutions, police, social welfare institutions, etc.) and civil society (local NGOs, community-based organizations, child groups, etc.). Some country offices, such as Nepal, have about 100 partners (Save the Children 2012a:25). SCN sees it as a strength to have a mix of government and civil society partners. This "mix," however, will vary, depending on available partners in each country. For instance, the country office in Russia works primarily with government agencies, whereas the country office in Uganda works mainly with local NGOs.

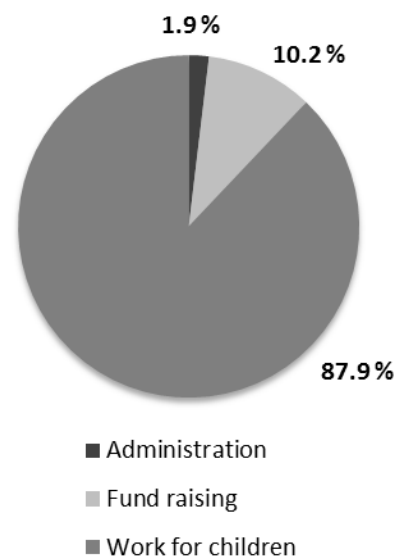


Each country office is responsible for selecting and following up on the work of its partners. This involves a series of formal and informal mechanisms, including project plans, periodic progress and financial reports, project and partner audits, monitoring visits, and daily communications. Although specific procedures vary from one country office to another, the assessment of partners' suitability focuses on four criteria: capacity to implement projects on the ground and deliver planned results; capacity to comply with SCN's reporting requirements; quality of financial management and trustworthiness; compatibility with SCN's mandate, values, and objectives.

### 3.4.3 Financial management

SCN places great emphasis on cost-efficiency and financial control. For the organization, optimum funds utilization means ensuring that most of SCN's income is spent on programs for children, and not on administrative costs. In 2011, administration and fundraising expenses accounted for 1.9 percent and 10.2 percent of SCN's overall budget, respectively (see Figure 5). With over 80 percent of its funds being used for program activities, SCN falls within the percentage of total expenditure regarded as ideal by the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO 2004:17)

*Figure 5: Distribution of costs – 2011*



Source: SCN (2012b)

To promote efficiency and safeguarding its assets from financial mismanagement, SCN adopts various internal control mechanisms. For instance, the organization has been using the system Agresso Planner since 2002. This budgeting, forecasting, and planning tool provides support to

controllers in Oslo and the country offices on daily finance management activities. It allows SCN to consolidate financial information at both head office and country office levels. In addition, country offices are required to submit monthly financial reports and quarterly prognoses for the full year's expenditure and income. SCN also has in place procedures related to approval of payments, electronic transfers, handling of petty cash, etc.

Regular external audits are another key component of financial management at SCN. They are required both by SCN's governing bodies and donors. Country offices are audited twice a year. The first audit, a half-year review, focuses on the control environment to ensure that controls and policies are in place. The second audit carry out at the end of the year focuses mainly on financial statements. Audits of partners are conducted to ensure that partners have spent funds as planned. These audits are either project-based or partner-based, depending on the volume of funds provided by SCN. Although auditing firms are hired by each country office, they must follow the supervision and auditing standards set by the organization's Finance Department in Oslo and SCN's official auditor, selected by the National Congress.

Even with these financial controls, SCN has experienced a few cases of corruption and fraud in recent years, although none of them involved large amounts of funds. In 2011, the organization reported three cases in which funds were misused by local partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina (NOK 10,000), Zimbabwe (NOK 2500) and Uganda (NOK 30,000). The first two cases are now closed and SCN has recovered the funds; the third case remains under investigation (SCN 2012c). SCN is meticulous about following up any cases of corruption, even when the amount in question is very small in comparison to its overall budget.

### **3.4.4 Humanitarian assistance**

SC national organizations have been working to improve cooperation and coordination in emergency situations since 1997. This process led to the development of a common governance structure, including principles, rules, roles and responsibilities during humanitarian operations. The system has evolved throughout the years to adapt to changes introduced with the Unified Presence initiative, and more recently, with the transition of country offices to the management of SCI.

Under the current scheme, SC categorizes emergencies as “declared” or “non-declared,” which are distinguished in terms of scale and severity. Declared emergencies are larger and more complex, requiring a unified effort on the part of all members, as with the floods in Pakistan in 2010 and the earthquake in Japan in 2011. Non-declared emergencies are smaller in scale and require a response by the country office in the affected country. Previously, declared emergencies were led by member organizations with special expertise in this type of work, such as SCUS and SCUK. With the merger of all international programs, SCI's International Programs Unit will assume the coordination of all declared emergencies.

Currently, SCN and other SC organizations have four main roles in emergency operations: to inform their domestic constituencies about the humanitarian crisis; to seek funding from national donors to support the emergency response, in line with the appeal and strategy targets; to second personnel to assist in the intervention; and to provide technical assistance.

### **3.4.5 Advocacy work**

SCN engages in advocacy work to influence the policies and actions of governments, international institutions, companies and civil society towards children. This involves, for example, lobbying the Ministry of Education in

countries where SCN operates or influencing the content of UN resolutions and Norwegian governmental White Papers. The organization not only documents violations of children's rights and their root causes, but proposes practical solutions drawing on its experience on the ground. In addition, SCN promotes the participation of children and adolescents in advocacy campaigns, enabling them to have a voice in matters that concern them.

Advocacy work is conducted on the basis of a division of responsibilities between the public relations department in Oslo and country office staff. In country offices directly managed by SCN, national advocacy campaigns are carried out by the local staff with support from head office. Additionally, SCN has throughout the years increased its collaboration with other SC members in advocacy efforts. One of the Alliance's common challenges for the period 2005–2010 was the education campaign Rewrite the Future. Conducted between 2005 and 2011, Rewrite the Future is considered SC's first global campaign.

#### **3.4.6 Risk management**

There is an overall awareness of the risks involved in SCN's work and the need to manage them. In fact, if "risk management" is understood in its broadest sense, there exist several policies and internal control mechanisms for dealing with risks for the organization and its beneficiaries. For instance, SCN has a Child Safeguarding Protocol (Save the Children 2010a), setting out the procedures and systems for protecting children involved with the organization from harm. Another example is the CPH Safety and Security Policy and Standards (Save the Children 2010b), which provides orientation and sets norms for dealing with risks to the safety and security of staff. Both policies have replaced guidelines that SCN used before the Unification. In addition, several policies that provide guidance for work processes in SCN note the potential risks. For instance, the Procurement Policy and Guidelines (SCN

2010f) list the major risks involved with procurement; and the Policy on Children's Participation (SCN 2010d) draws attention to the dilemmas and risks involved in promoting children's participation in SCN's advocacy campaigns.

SCN has zero tolerance of fraud and corruption, and has adopted several strategies to minimize financial mismanagement. For instance, an alert-raising mechanism enables individuals or groups associated with the organization to report anonymously on suspicions of non-compliance with SCN's ethical principles<sup>14</sup>. These are investigated by the Control Committee, which is appointed by the Council of Representatives and is not directly involved in the operations of the organization.

Due to the Unification process, SCN has also adopted new guidelines and global policies from SCI that include procedures to identify and manage risks. For instance, the CPH grant management guidelines include a five-stage process for assessing and managing the risks that a grant brings to SC (SCI 2011). The emphasis on risk management is likely to come even in focus with the transition to SCI. At the time of my fieldwork, SCI was in the process of hiring a Risk Manager, developing an official risk policy, and establishing risk management process. These will be embedded into all country offices under the management of SCI's International Programs Unit.

And yet, this is merely the tip of the iceberg. As Hutter and Power (2005:1–2) remind us, “the management of risk in general is a constitutive feature of organizations.” SCN's accounting practices; its planning, monitoring and evaluation routines; its procedures for hiring employees and selecting partners – all play a role in the management of risk in its broadest sense.

---

<sup>14</sup> The organization has adopted the INGO Accountability Charter.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

Having introduced the “world” of SCN, I will describe how this study was conducted and the rationale for the choice of research methods. I begin by introducing the overall research design, and then outline the methods used for data collection and how the data was analyzed. Finally, I discuss some weaknesses of this thesis.

### 4.1 Research design

In any given study, the choice of research design will stem from the researcher’s philosophical assumptions about the nature the world and how it should be studied (Moses and Knutsen 2007). This is evident in risk scholarship, where a plethora of competing ontological and epistemological views on risk<sup>15</sup> inform different research approaches (Rosa 1998). Therefore, it is essential to clarify where this study stands, before discussing the methodology.

#### 4.1.1 A socio-cultural perspective on risk

This work is grounded in a socio-cultural perspective on risk (e.g. Lupton and Tulloch 2002, Tulloch and Lupton 2003, Bickerstaff 2004). Traced back to Douglas’ (1985, 1992) view of risk as socially constructed, this approach rejects the idea of risk as an objective entity that exists somewhere out there, independent of the human beings who perceive it (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn 2006, Zinn 2006). Rather, the socio-cultural perspective maintains that risk should be understood as a social phenomenon influenced by broader social

---

<sup>15</sup> These include “revealed preference versus perceived preference, cultural theory versus rational action, social constructivism versus naive positivism, methodological individualism versus methodological holism, etc.” (Rosa 1998:16)

factors and societal processes, as well as by individual personal experience (Zinn 2006). Understandings about risk are seen as historical, local, and subject to continuous debate and reconstruction (Tulloch and Lupton 2003, Zinn 2006). However, the socio-cultural perspective seeks to overcome the theoretical abstraction and functionalistic character of cultural theory, which attributes differences in perception and response to risk to individual adherence to certain modes of social organization (Zinn 2006).

Coming from anthropology, geography, and sociology, proponents of the socio-cultural perspective hold that risk issues must be studied in the contexts where people encounter and make judgments about risk, such as everyday life or organizations. Consequently, they favor qualitative data collection techniques, contextual data analysis, and thick descriptions (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn 2006, Zinn 2006).

#### **4.1.2 A qualitative approach**

Qualitative inquiry seeks to make sense of the multiple meanings that individuals and groups bring to human affairs (Creswell 2007, Stake 2010). Holistic and field-oriented, qualitative research investigates complex social phenomena in real-life settings, where researchers interact closely with participants for extended periods of time (Stake 2010). The approach is known for its reflexivity, as researchers are aware that their interpretations cannot be separated from their own backgrounds, prior knowledge, and philosophical assumptions (Creswell 2007).

In line with a socio-cultural perspective on risk, this study has adopted a qualitative approach to investigate how perceptions of organizational risks are constructed. Although quantitative inquiry has otherwise dominated the study of risk perception (Gustafsson 1998, Wählberg 2001), a qualitative approach was deemed preferable here because it allows the researcher to tap into people's thoughts, judgments, and beliefs about risk in the very context where

these understandings are produced. In addition, since research design cannot be separated from philosophical assumptions in risk scholarship, a reflexive methodological approach seemed particularly relevant.

### **4.1.3 Case-study method**

The socio-cultural perspective on risk that underlies this study calls for context-oriented research. The case-study method was considered the most appropriate approach for capturing the interplay between employee perceptions of organizational risks and the broad organizational context where these views are constructed.

Case study is an empirical research method that enables scholars to investigate contemporary phenomena within their natural setting (Yin 2003a, Scholtz and Tietje 2002 cited in Swanson and Holton 2005). By making use of multiple sources of evidence and data collection techniques (Hancock and Algozzine 2006), the method can produce a wealth of information and allow researchers to explore the multiple variables that influence a given phenomenon (Swanson and Holton 2005). In addition, cases studies draw attention to context, providing thorough descriptions (Yin 2003a, Swanson and Holton 2005). The context is recognized as important, whether because it is essential for understanding a phenomenon or because the phenomenon under investigation cannot be easily distinguished from its context (Yin 2003a). Researchers must delimit where the case begins and ends, which is done by selecting a unit of analysis and specific space and time boundaries (ibid). In organizational research, case studies have been conducted using employees, departments, or entire organizations as the unit of analysis (Swanson and Holton 2005).

This thesis can be described as a holistic single case study (Yin 2003a), conducted for both exploratory (ibid.) and instrumental purposes (Stake 1994, 1995 cited in Berg 2001). Having selected SCN, I defined the organization itself as primary unit of analysis. The choice of single-case design reflects the



impossibility of researching more than one organization in depth, given the constraints on time and funding. The choice of a single unit of analysis stems from a critical assessment of the only study available of organizational risk perception in NGOs (Mohammed 2007). As noted in Chapter 2, that study takes organizational context for granted, failing to problematize the very context where perceptions of organizational risk are investigated. In view of that shortcoming, this thesis adopted SCN as primary unit of analysis to situate employees' perceptions of organizational risk within the context of the aid industry itself.

The choice of SCN was not due to its possible uniqueness (Stake 1994 cited in Berg 2001). There are at least four other Norwegian NGOs<sup>16</sup> that could help to advance our understanding of organizational risk perception in humanitarian and development NGOs, given their size, international presence, and operational complexity. SCN was selected largely because of the possibilities of gaining sufficient access. However, that is not to say that the case was not properly investigated. Since the topic of risk and NGOs remains so little examined, I adopted an exploratory research approach, in order to establish questions and hypotheses for subsequent investigations (Yin 2003b). Consequently, data collection was based on broad set of questions rather than a pre-defined research problem (see interview guide in Appendix A). That has implications for the findings of this study, a point discussed at the end of this chapter.

## 4.2 Data collection

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Norway between August 31 and November 22, 2011. Two qualitative data collection strategies were used: in-

---

<sup>16</sup> Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian People's Aid, and the Norwegian Refugee Council

depth semi-structured interviews with employees; and analysis of organizational documents. The interviews served as primary source of information, while the internal documents were used to gain a better understanding of the context. Since I am not fluent in Norwegian, I was not able to use participant observation as a data collection strategy.

#### **4.2.1 Access to fieldwork**

Gaining access to the research setting is a common challenge faced by organizational researchers. According to Buchanan *et al.* (1988), researchers must be prepared to spend weeks and even months to secure access to fieldwork, as this process depends on the organization's goodwill. I adopted three strategies suggested in the literature on organizational studies for gaining access to SCN: I explored my connections with the target organization (Buchanan *et al.* 1988, Laurila 1997, Shenton and Hayter 2004); I offered to share the research findings (Sharp and Howard 1996, Shenton and Hayter 2004); and I portrayed the research project as useful and risk-free (Buchanan *et al.* 1988, Yeager and Kram 1990 cited in Laurila 1997).

The first contact with SCN was established in June 2011. My thesis supervisor asked an acquaintance in the organization to receive a research proposal and circulate it for internal discussion. A formal request for research access was then submitted, with letter of intent, research proposal, and a recommendation letter from my supervisor. Official permission to study SCN was granted by email in the beginning of July. Although obtaining formal access took only a month, a meeting to discuss the practicalities of research originally scheduled for early August had to be postponed to the end of the month, delaying the beginning of fieldwork.

At this meeting, I presented the research project and negotiated the practical aspects of research. These included procedures for scheduling interviews and collecting documents, confidentiality issues, and time available for interviews.

I was granted access to internal documents, and was allowed to contact staff and schedule interviews during working hours. In addition, one staff member was appointed as my “link person” (Buchanan *et al.* 1988:60), which would help me to contact respondents and obtain documents. Nevertheless, SCN made it clear that it was up to each employee to decide whether or not to participate. Formal access to the research setting was not a guarantee that employees would serve as informants (Laurila 1997).

To build goodwill, I offered to make the thesis available to SCN and to produce a short report with findings relevant for the organization. In addition, I tried to show that giving me research access would not entail risks for SCN. For instance, I volunteered to sign non-disclosure agreements with SCN and SCI (see Appendix B), which included the obligation to restrict public access to the completed master’s thesis.

#### **4.2.2 Interviews**

Interviews are recognized as a good strategy for producing data about people’s opinions, feelings, ideas, and experiences (Denscombe 2007). This study involved semi-structured interviews using a set of open-ended questions that were developed prior to the fieldwork. That approach allows the researcher to stay focused on relevant topics for the study, without restricting participants’ ability to articulate their own thoughts or raise additional issues (*ibid*).

The interviews were normally arranged via email. I sent invitations to potential respondents, with information about the research objectives and questions. This strategy worked well. Most of those I contacted replied, either to make an appointment or to say they did not wish to be interviewed. The actual

interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes; they normally began with general questions about the respondent,<sup>17</sup> followed by questions about risk.

Due to funding limitations on conducting research outside Norway, the interview procedures were not uniform across the sample. Three approaches were adopted: face-to-face interviews, Skype interviews, and email interviews. I conducted 23 interviews in total, using Skype in six and email in one of them (see Table 4). The face-to-face interviews were all conducted at SCN headquarters in Oslo. Using Skype allowed me to reach respondents in four countries, otherwise impossible due to time and cost constraints. This was particularly important because the bulk of SCN operations take place outside Norway. On the other hand, Skype cannot provide the same levels of information possible in a face-of-face interview: even with a video camera, some body language is inevitably lost (Cater 2011). I also experienced some problems in using Skype for interviewing. For one thing, I had intended to use both audio and video; however, this proved possible in only a few interviews. Some respondents preferred not to use video, others did not have a camera, or their Internet connection was simply unable to sustain video and audio connection simultaneously. In practice, most Skype interviews were basically telephone interviews.

All respondents allowed me to record the interviews, except one who asked me to take notes instead. I used a digital voice recorder for face-to-face interviews and the software Pamela<sup>18</sup> for Skype interviews. All interviews were conducted in English. This was generally not a problem, as most respondents spoke good English. However, with four respondents I experienced communication problems. It was evident that they would have expressed their

---

<sup>17</sup> Such as: main task and responsibilities, period of time working for the organization, etc.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.pamela.biz/en/>

views more freely in their mother tongues. That, however, would have required me to be fluent or hire interpreters in four different languages.

### Sampling strategy

Given the exploratory nature of this study and SCN's international presence, the selection of participants was based on a maximum variation sampling. This strategy aims at achieving a heterogeneous group of interviewees (Swanson and Holton 2005). Such sampling allows the researcher to capture a wide range of perspectives about the phenomenon under investigation and to identify common patterns across the sample (Swanson and Holton 2005). The strategy requires researchers to identify the variables they want to maximize in the selection of respondents (Sandelowski 1995). Three variables were selected for this study: working location (e.g. head office, various country offices); area of function (human resources, finance, programs, etc.); and place in the hierarchical structure (field office, country director, regional director, general secretary, etc.).

During fieldwork, however, executing a maximum variation sampling strategy proved impossible. Due to research access restrictions (explained in section 4.5.1 below), I had to adopt a convenience sampling strategy: that is, selecting respondents on the basis of their availability for participating in the research project (Denscombe 2007). In turn, that meant that the final sample was dominated by respondents from certain working locations (especially Nepal, Uganda, head office) and functional areas/organizational levels (especially program implementation and senior management team). The information related to functional area and organizational level was aggregated in order to protect the identity of respondents. In total, I interviewed 23 respondents: 11 employees from SCN head office in Oslo, two from other SC organizations (SCI and SC Denmark); and 10 from country offices in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nepal, South East Europe (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro), Russia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe (see Table 4).

Table 4: Sample overview

	Code name	Working location	Area of function / organizational level	Type of interview	Interview date
Country Offices	#19-F-CAM	Cambodia	Program Implementation	face-to-face	28.10.2011
	#20-M-ETH	Ethiopia	Program Implementation	face-to-face	28.10.2011
	#14-F-NE	Nepal (includes Bhutan)	Senior Management Team	Skype	18.10.2011
	#8-F-NE	Nepal (includes Bhutan)	Senior Management Team	Skype	21.11.2011
	#17-M-RU	Russia	Senior Management Team	face-to-face	27.10.2011
	#4-F-SEE	South East Europe (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro)	Senior Management Team	Skype	14.09.2011
	#13-F-UG	Uganda	Finance/Auditing	Skype	05.10.2011
	#18-M-UG	Uganda	Program Implementation	face-to-face	28.10.2011
	#23-F-UG	Uganda	Senior Management Team	Skype	20.11.2011
	#21-M-ZIN	Zimbabwe	Senior Management Team	face-to-face	28.10.2011
Save the Children Norway	#1-M-NOR	Head office	Program Implementation	face-to-face	31.08.2011
	#2-M-NOR	Head office	Administration	face-to-face	06.09.2011
	#3-M-NOR	Head office	Program Implementation	face-to-face	13.09.2011
	#5-F-NOR	Head office	Human Resources	face-to-face	14.09.2011
	#6-F-NOR	Head office	Communications	face-to-face	15.09.2011
	#7-F-NOR	Head office	Human Resources	face-to-face	16.09.2011
	#9-M-NOR	Head office	Program Implementation	face-to-face	26.09.2011
	#10-F-NOR	Head office	Program Implementation	face-to-face	26.09.2011
	#15-F-NOR	Head office	Senior Management Team	face-to-face	20.10.2011
	#16-F-NOR	Head office	Emergency Response	face-to-face	26.10.2011
	#22-M-NOR	Head office	Finance/Auditing	face-to-face	31.10.2011
SC	#11-F-SCD	SC Denmark	Transition to SCI	Skype	03.10.2011
	#12-M-SCI	SCI	Risk Management	email questions	04.10.2011

### 4.2.3 Documents

Although my analysis relies heavily on the interview material, internal documents proved fundamental for understanding SCN's organizational structure and operational model. Such documents included standard operating procedures, funding applications, cooperation agreements with donors, policy and strategy documents, reports and organizational evaluations. Gaining access to these documents also allowed me to save time during the interviews, so I could focus on the risk-related questions. Except for a few occasional difficulties, I was granted access to nearly all the documents I requested; indeed, SCN even granted access me to its intranet, where various documents and internal communications were stored. With access to the organization's intranet, I did not have to request permission for each individual item I wanted to consult.

## 4.3 Data analysis

The analysis began with the transcription of all audio recordings using the software HyperTRANSCRIBE<sup>19</sup>. Instead of transcribing the interviews word by word, I adopted a selective approach, skipping the "uh's," the false starts, silences, coughs, and sighs. I incorporated notes into the transcriptions in cases where the hesitations, non-verbal cues and emotional aspects were especially notable.

All transcriptions were imported into NVivo9<sup>20</sup>, a qualitative data analysis software. I read each transcription several times in order to become familiar with the material (Agar 1980 cited in Creswell 2007), writing short memos

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.researchware.com/products/hypertranscribe.html>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.qsrinternational.com/products\\_nvivo.aspx](http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx)

about the data. Following an inductive and iterative process, I assigned codes to fragments of interview transcriptions as I went through the material in NVivo9. Saldaña (2009:3) defines code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” I carried out countless rounds of coding, moving slowly from codes to themes and from the descriptive level towards a more analytical level. This was a time-consuming process because I needed to explore possible leads, research questions and hypotheses. However, it helped me to gain a broad understanding of risk issues in SCN. When organizational risk perception had been defined as the main focus of research, I conducted another round of coding and analysis based on the theoretical framework described in Chapter 2.

## 4.4 Ethical considerations

Three main ethical challenges were encountered in this study: concealing the identity of informants; safeguarding the reputation of SCN; and causing distress to participant by raising risk issues (Pidgeon *et al.* 2008).

### 4.4.1 Anonymity

Organizations are relatively small worlds. Even though respondents' names can be replaced by codes, other attributes may reveal their identity to co-workers (e.g. work location, area of function, job title). In practice, therefore, it is hard to ensure complete anonymity in organizational research (Borgatti 2005).

In this study, I assigned an identity code to each respondent, with interview number, gender, and working location (e.g. #1-M-NOR and #22-F-NE). Given the emphasis on situating risk perceptions, it was important to retain the information regarding working location. Information about job title was



removed, and the gender of respondents was randomly altered to ensure greater anonymity.

#### **4.4.2 Safeguarding the organization**

According to Bulmer (1988:156), researchers have an “obligation in any material that is published to safeguard the organization from revelations that could be harmful to its commercial activities or its reputation.” This can be achieved by either obtaining the approval of the organization prior to publication or concealing the organization’s identity as a whole. Both alternatives have their shortcomings. Requesting official approval may mean that a study will never see the light of the day, if the organization finds it inappropriate (ibid.). And anonymizing an entire organization might not be possible if the number of similar organizations is small (Healey and Rawlinson 1993). In both cases, researchers may be forced to renounce on data that are relevant for the study, but that could damage the organization’s reputation or reveal its identity.

Faced with this dilemma, I opted to seek for permission from SCN. Therefore, this study is submitted to the University of Oslo as a *restricted-access master’s thesis*. It will not be made available for public consultation until I obtain SCN approval for this.

#### **4.4.3 Raising risk issues**

Given its focus on people’s views on risk and experiences, socio-cultural risk research can cause distress to some participants. According to Pidgeon *et al.* (2008), raising risk issues with participants may trigger doubts and uncertainties about the situation being discussed, especially in the case of interviews. This can create anxiety, with repercussions long after fieldwork is completed. There is no easy way out of this ethical dilemma. If risk research is not explicitly framed as such, that raises questions regarding participants’

---

informed consent. I opted for being explicit about the study objectives when I sought to recruit participants. In addition, during the interviews I emphasized that participants were free to withdraw or refuse to answer any questions.

## 4.5 Challenges and study limitations

Although I could have written an entire thesis about the challenges and limitations of this study, only three key topics will be discussed in the following sections: poor access to respondents; shortcomings of risk research; and the problems involved in exploratory case-study design.

### 4.5.1 Research access and sampling

Even though research access to SCN was easily obtained, I struggled to establish contacts with country office staff, due to the problem of “layered permissions.” As noted by Buchanan and Bryman (2007:490), organizational researchers usually cannot approach potential respondents directly. They must obtain the permission or assistance from a “senior management gatekeeper.” In this study, SCN said I should ask the head office employees who follow up on country offices to forward to the various country directors my request to interview their staff. Although this procedure worked well, it blocked my access to respondents in a few cases. Some of these “head office gatekeepers” never responded my emails; some were out of the country throughout my fieldwork period; or refused to put me in contact with country offices. As a researcher, I often felt as if I had no power. It was important for me to pursue potential respondents, but if I was perceived as too “pushy,” I could put my own research access at risk.

To make progress, I had to adopt a convenience sampling strategy and an “opportunistic approach.” As noted by Buchanan *et al.* (1988:55) ensuring adequate data collection is important, but “the practice of field research [in

organizations] is the art of possible. It is necessary to exploit the opportunities offered in the circumstances.” For instance, when I learned by chance that employees from several country offices were gathered in Oslo for a meeting, I obtained the list of participants and directly approached people from country offices I had not yet contacted. In the course of two days, I was able to interview employees from four countries.

Such restrictions on research access have repercussions for the objectives and results of this study. Although I treat SCN as the main unit of analysis, my sample clearly does not reflect SCN as a whole. Most of my respondents were involved with long-term development work. I spoke with only one person who works in emergency response and I did not interview anyone from the Domestic Programs Department. Consequently, a considerable part of SCN’s operations was poorly covered or entirely left outside this study. For that reason, the findings presented here cannot and should not be generalized to SCN as a whole.

It should be noted that this sampling problem was not caused solely by access restrictions. Conducting an exploratory study is like building an airplane in flight. By the time I realized the need to talk to more employees involved in emergency response or to investigate perceptions of risk among staff in the domestic program, it was already too late to stop, re-design the study, and start anew.

#### **4.5.2 The problem of researching risk**

Henwood *et al.* (2008) draw attention to the problem of “risk framing” during the research process. That happens when the researcher inadvertently transfers his or her own conceptualizations of risk and ideas about what qualifies as risky to respondents. Drawing on the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011), the problem could be described as: How do researchers ask

---

participants to identify risks, without imparting to them the researchers' constructions of risk objects, objects at risk, or relationships of risk?

In this sense, it could be argued that in asking my informants to identify what they see as a risk for their organization, I was *already* constructing SCN as an object at risk. It might be questioned whether employees themselves would construct the organization as an object at risk without being asked to do so. This is a limitation of this study, and of other studies of risk perception. For instance, when Corvellec (2010) and Mohamed (2007, 2010) asked employees about organizational risks, they were also constructing the case-study organizations as objects at risk. And when Lupton and Tulloch (2002a, b, 2003) asked a group of Australians what they perceived as risks for themselves and for their fellow citizens, the researchers were also constructing the participants and indeed the population of Australia as objects at risk.

In fact, if risk has three constitutive elements (risk object, object at risk, and relationship of risk) the real question is whether it is at all possible to ask people about their views on risk, unless one of these variables is kept constant. Therefore, the greatest contribution of the relational theory of risk is to allow researchers to reflect upon the risk objects, objects at risk, and risk relationships that they might be transferring to their respondents.

#### **4.5.3 Problems involved in exploratory case-study design**

According to Yin (2003a, b), exploratory case studies are always the prelude to “real” research. As such, they cannot produce more than leads, directions, and hypotheses for further inquiry. However, when there is no time or opportunity for a subsequent “real study,” researchers are left with a plethora of methodological problems. In the following sections, I examine two possible weaknesses of this study: poor case-study boundaries; and lack of focus and theory.

### A 'messy' case

Back when SCN managed its own country offices, it was easy to see where the organization began and ended. With the Unification process, well underway, however, what I found was an organization working hard to juggle three different governance systems for coordinating its operations abroad. To organize this “organizational mess,” I used a financial criterion to determine what counted or not as “SCN:” I considered all country offices that receive a substantial part of their budgets from SCN as being a part of the organization Save the Children Norway. That means that respondents from Nepal and Cambodia were treated as SCN employees, even though they technically were under SCI. At the time of my fieldwork, SCN had just transferred or was in the process of transferring these country offices to the management of SCI.

As seen in Chapter 3, this meant to some extent putting apples and bananas in the same basket. Each county office has its own history and country context, and there are countless factors that could influence respondents' answers. Moreover, by grouping country offices then in different stages of the unification process (SCN-managed, unified, SCI-managed), I of course was not taking into consideration the influence of other SC national organizations on the views of my respondents. This is particularly problematic, since several interviewees argued that SCN is very different from other sister organizations, in terms of organizational culture and management style.

### Lack of focus and theory

In an exploratory case study, the research problem and theoretical framework are often defined along the way (Yin 2003a,b). Although this allows great freedom to researchers, it is also a recipe for obtaining incomplete data. In this study, asking respondents about what they perceived as risks to their organization was only one of the topics explored. This is the reason why some quotes from respondents are used more than once throughout the thesis. Moreover, without previously delimiting the research problem, I had to

identify along the way theories that could help me to make sense of my data. When I finally became acquainted with the relational theory of risk (Corvellec and Boholm 2011), data collection had already been completed. While analyzing the interview transcripts, I realized that I could have made the interviews more focused and probed more efficiently if I had selected this research problem and this theory right already at the outset, but...

## 5. DECONSTRUCTING RISK

What do the following have in common: a case of child abuse, misuse of funds, the death of an employee, and failure to deliver project outcomes? They are all risks to Save the Children Norway, or at least, they are perceived as such by its employees (after Giddens 1999:1). In this chapter, I provide an account of these and other organizational risks identified by respondents.

Drawing on Boholm and Corvellec's (2011) tripartite notion of risk, I will deconstruct the risk issues singled out by SCN staff and reveal their constitutive elements. Risk objects, objects at risk, and relationships of risk are mutually constructed and subject to continuous reinterpretation (Boholm and Corvellec 2011). However, a starting point is necessary in order to describe the data. To explore how certain objects are framed as valuable and others as dangerous, I will describe the relationships of risk constructed by respondents from two different angles: first, from the perspective of the risk object; then, from the perspective of the object at risk.

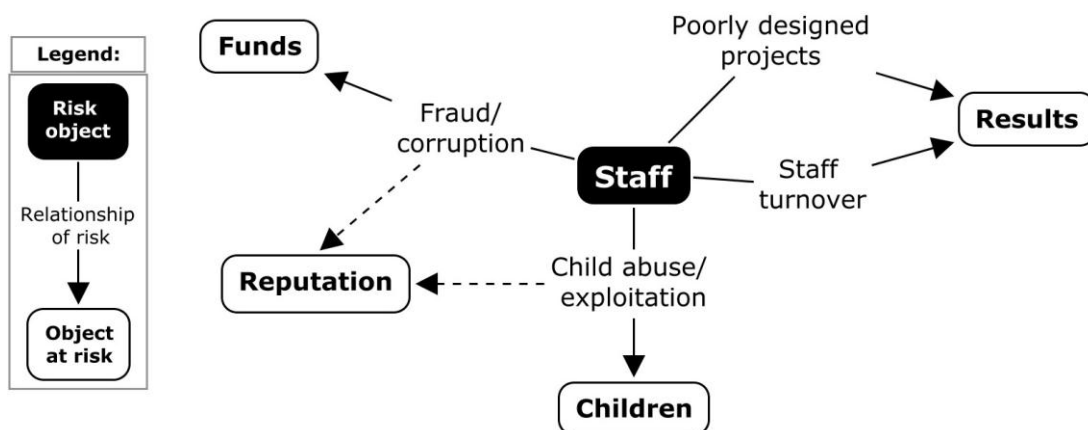
### 5.1 Risk objects

Risk objects resemble hazards, as they embody the possibility of causing harm to what is considered valuable (Boholm and Corvellec 2011). In their examples of organizational risks, most of my respondents constructed four risk objects: staff, partners, the host government, and the host country. In the next sections, we examine the risk relationships built around each of these objects, focusing on how they were constructed as dangerous.

### 5.1.1 Staff

In their examples of organizational risks, eight respondents (five from head office and three from country offices) saw the staff of SCN as a risk object. They feared that employees could abuse children, misuse funds, drive programs and projects to failure, and jeopardize SCN's reputation (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Relationships of risk – staff as risk object



Five respondents (four from head office and one from Bosnia-Herzegovina) described the occurrence of a case of child abuse or exploitation involving SCN personnel as a risk for the organization. Constructing the employee as a risk object and the child as an object at risk, respondents imagined a plot (Corvellec 2011) in which the implementation of programs carried out by the organization could create opportunities for employees to take advantage of children. As the respondent from Bosnia-Herzegovina puts it:

[A] risk with which we are very concerned about is misuse of children. Sometimes, it may be by an employee. I'm not necessarily saying us. But you can see it in the west coast of Africa, with the UN forces that have been misusing young girls for handing out food. (#4-F-SEE)

Respondents were particularly concerned with cases of sexual abuse. For instance, a respondent from head office explained:



---

Risk is also related to what we can or cannot do to children. You see in the newspaper from time to time people involved in aid organizations, but who have been demanding sexual services from children in big programs. So that's a risk, if anything like that happens. We have to ensure that it doesn't happen, especially related to children. (#10-F-NOR)

In constructing the employee as a risk object, another respondent from head office suggested that children's rights organizations such as SCN are an obvious target for pedophiles. "There are predators out there, and they are looking for opportunities. They are attracted by this kind of organization, because it gives them the opportunity to meet children" (#5-F-NOR). This respondent also emphasized the importance of having good human resource policies and procedures to prevent the organization from hiring "dangerous employees."

Five respondents (three from head office and one each from Uganda and Nepal) constructed relationships of risk involving SCN staff and the results of projects and programs implemented by the organization. Two respondents from head office spoke of the risk that an employee might leave the organization in the middle of the project. That could interrupt or delay the implementation of activities, affecting the achievement of planned results. Three respondents (one from head office and two from Uganda and Nepal) identified a different risk. In their view, SCN faces the risk that plans developed by staff have design flaws that could hinder the success of projects and programs implemented by the organization. The respondent from Uganda explained:

One of the risks that we identified in some of our projects is the continuous use of project strategies that are not effective. We believe that there are times where a concept may be brought forward informally and turn into a project strategy. But then, when you start implementing that project strategy, maybe this turns out to be not appropriate. If you don't go back to the drawing board to correct that project strategy, that means that the project staff will continue implementing activities that are not going to have the desired outcome. If correcting actions are not

---

taken, the project will come to an end, and by the time the evaluation is done it will be discovered that the project never met its objectives and unfortunately the project resources have all been lost. (#13-F-UG)

Five respondents (two from Uganda and three from head office) identified the risk of fraud and corruption involving staff members. In doing so, they constructed the employee as a source of danger for SCN's funds. They feared that employees might divert funds intended to help beneficiaries, for their personal benefit. For instance, a respondent in Oslo said:

Because there is a distance between us [head office] and them [country offices]. It could be that there are things happening at the country office, [such as] a person abusing power. This person who has some kind of power over the financial resources is not using the resources in the best possible way. (#1-M-NOR)

A respondent from Uganda noted that some areas of the organization are more vulnerable to fraud and corruption:

It has mainly to do with procurement. Procurement is the main area. Another area is construction. When we build schools, we spend quite some money on having schools up to the standards. Given the amount of money that we use on construction, I think this could be an area of risk for us. (#23-F-UG)

Children, funds, and results were not the only valuable objects that could be endangered by the actions of SCN personnel. Nearly all respondents who mentioned the risks of child abuse, fraud, and corruption also constructed SCN's reputation as an object at risk. As a respondent from head office argued:

We face, for instance, a risk in Norway too, to our reputation. If an employee working with SC does something wrong, which puts the light of the media on that person, that might also endanger the whole organization, the willingness to donate money to us. (#5-F-NOR)

### 5.1.2 Partners

SCN has gradually moved away from self-implementation of programs towards working with partners in the South, such as governmental agencies and local NGOs (Kruse *et al.* 2009). Even though partnership is a key working principle for SCN, 13 respondents (nine from country offices and four from head office) argued that working with partners can be a risky business. In their examples of organizational risk, respondents described relationships of risk in which partners could misappropriate funds or compromise the achievement of planned results (see Figure 7).

*Figure 7: Relationships of risk – partners as risk object*



Nine respondents (two from head office and seven from country offices in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nepal, Russia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) argued that whenever SCN supports local partners financially, there is a risk of losing funds through fraud or corruption. For instance, a respondent from Nepal stressed the risk of corruption involving governmental partners:

We, by Nepalese law, have to work through local NGOs and through the government. So, we can choose, we can work with both of them or one of them. We tend to work with both, because we want to influence government policy and procedures. Yet, at the same time, there's a lot of corruption in the government around finances, so we can have more control, which is the word, in working with NGOs to ensure that funds go to communities. (#14-F-NE)

As a result, SCN must be careful when providing financial resources to partners, as a respondent from Bosnia-Herzegovina explained:

If we have a brand-new partner, particularly an NGO, we start with them slowly and let them prove themselves. This is something we also do with the government. Then, when things are going well we can

---

increase the risk by doing more risky things, more innovation and higher level of financing. (#4-F-SEE)

Four respondents from country offices in Ethiopia, Nepal, and Uganda constructed another object at risk: the results of project and programs implemented through Southern partners. If partners lack capacity or commitment, they argued, this could delay or interrupt the implementation of programs, putting the achievement of expected results at stake. In fact, one respondent from Uganda suggested that partnership is inherently risky. Although SCN relies on local partners to implement most of its programs, the organization does not have control over them. He said:

A risk... I would say...it is the partnership mode. It's very nice but it also has its challenges. I would say that 90 percent of what we do is through partners, and yet we don't really have that much control over what the partners do. So, if the partner chooses to run the program funded by someone else and keeps yours aside, you can only say: "Hey guys, what's happening? We need to move on." But if they are not really up to it, you're stuck; and that doesn't reflect well on us. So, in that sense, I see it as a risk. (#18-M-UG)

To reduce partnerships risks, all country offices have adopted procedures intended to prevent the selection of the wrong partners. "We look for possible risks" (#17-M-RU), as a respondent from Russia explained it. Interestingly, a respondent from head office argued that SCN "plays safe," as the organization tends to work with well-established partners. She explained:

I think we should maybe take more risks than we do in terms of partnerships. If you look at the partners we have, they are quite established and we have been working with them for quite some time. We do know that they have adequate financial systems. We do know that they have adequate governance systems. So they are safe. They are not too risky to work with. We also know that they deliver on the program side. (#15-F-NOR)

This respondent went on to say that working with partners may come into conflict with finance management standards expected of SCN, and that creates dilemmas for the organization. As she saw it, selecting a grassroots partner

---

may allow SCN to reach its target group, but it also entails a higher risk of funds being lost. She said:

If you really want to look at grassroots and civil society, you will then have to work with partners that do not know much about finance systems and do not have a proper governance system. But they might do a hell of a good work for young people. So, it is always this dilemma. There are constant dilemmas in this type of work: the ideology one has, versus the demand for control. Controlling the risks, if you like, it's constant. (#15-F-NOR)

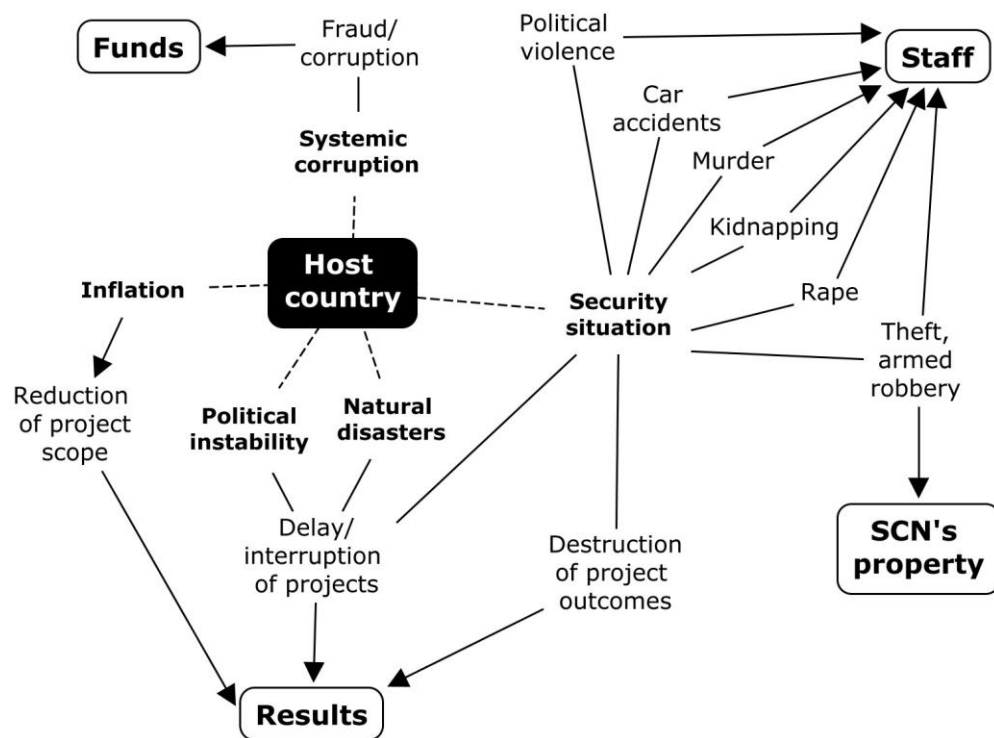
Another dilemma involving partners described by this respondent had to do with control and autonomy. On one hand, SCN is required by its donors to control the funds provided to partners. On the other hand, SCN is expected to encourage local ownership and give autonomy to Southern partners. She explained:

How can you be sure unless you follow up the partners closely? You're supposed to develop civil society (...) and give them the freedom to develop their own organization. At the same time you're asked to control the money you support them with (...). So it's a dilemma. (#15-F-NOR)

### **5.1.3 The host country**

The host country was one of the most prominent risk objects singled out by respondents: 17 respondents (eight from head office and nine from various country offices) described the developing and transition countries in which SCN operates as “risky places.” They were depicted as countries where the results of programs, funds, and the safety of SCN personnel are endangered by political instability, inflation, natural disasters, systemic corruption, and insecurity (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Relationships of risk – host country as risk object



Twelve respondents (seven from head office and five from country offices) argued that the security situation in the host countries is a source of danger to SCN. Although some interviewees provided examples of risk in which the organization's property or the implementation of programs were at stake, nearly all respondents focused on the safety and well-being of staff. For instance, a respondent from head office said:

It needs to be recognized that SC works in some of the most difficult situations in the world, like in the middle of Afghanistan (...). And then you are inevitably taking a risk in just being in there, maybe on the lives of your own staff. (#10-F-NOR)

Respondents established various relationships of risk involving staff and the security situation in the host country: from employees falling victim to common crime, to being caught in the middle of a violent demonstration. A respondent from Zimbabwe expanded on the range of possible risks:

I mean, it is security at different levels. There is safety and security in terms of personal theft, armed robbery, rape, that kind of security. But then there's also political violence, which at this point is not an issue.

---

But if elections are tomorrow, there is likely to be intimidation. There is likely to be violence associated with the parties. (...) So I think for us in Zimbabwe, the risk is surely the potential for politically related violence and then the usual, like road safety. Actually this is currently our biggest concern. We had several accidents this year. (#21-M-ZIN)

A respondent from head office also noted that the risk of staff being harmed in car accidents is high: “Statistically, the most dangerous thing for us is car accidents, people getting killed in the traffic. It is not only for us, but for all NGOs and the UN as well.” (#7-F-NOR)

Five respondents (three from the head office and two from Uganda) identified the systemic corruption in some countries where SCN operates as a risk for the organization, and mentioned funds as an object at risk. A respondent from head office noted: “We are working in many countries which are very difficult in relation to transparency and corruption” (#10-F-NOR). Another respondent, also from Oslo, spoke of “[countries] where gifts and kickbacks are a normal part of the economy” (#15-F-NOR). In the respondents’ view, widespread corruption in the host country indicates that there is a higher risk of funds being misused by country office or partner personnel. A respondent from Uganda said:

Uganda is maybe one of the most corrupt countries in the world (...) A number of our ministries [in the government] have been caught in extreme involvement in corruption cases. For us, that is a good indicator that corruption is indeed happening at higher levels. Therefore, the likelihood of other people trying to emulate that is quite high. (#23-F-UG)

Seven respondents (two from head office and five from country offices in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nepal, and Uganda) established relationships of risk between the host country and the results of SCN’s programs and projects. Depending on their working context, they tended to highlighted one main characteristic of the host country in their examples of risk, be it the political situation, security, inflation or vulnerability to natural disasters. Six respondents constructed the political situation in the host country as a possible

threat to the achievement of results. Some of them argued that political instability could slow or even interrupt projects and programs that are implemented in partnership with the government. Two respondents mentioned the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where an education project fell behind schedule because even one year after the elections no government had yet been formed. A respondent from Nepal provided an example of how a decision about the location of a project was made on the basis of an assessment of the country's political situation. She said:

We were running a project that is funded by our sponsorship program (...) There was a plan to exit from one area and concentrate the project in only one location. (...) But when we analyzed the country situation we felt that it would be too risk for us to run the program in only one site. (...). If something happens in that location, we cannot operate the program here in Nepal, so the whole project would stop. So, realizing this risk we developed an understanding that we should have two different sites. (#8-F-NE)

This example also demonstrates that perceptions of risk are a driving force of organizational actions.

In addition to political instability, four respondents identified the occurrence of natural disasters as a risk to the achievement of planned results. For instance, a respondent from head office noted that a natural disaster could interrupt the implementation of education projects because schools are often used as shelters during emergencies. He explained:

The country offices in Asia are just constantly faced with natural disasters (...). So, from their perspective, (...) you might have a fantastically well-planned educational program that is going to get more out-of-school children into the school. Then, as it happened last year in Pakistan with the floods, suddenly all the available schools became shelters. That is a risk, of course. Because what is going to happen to the kids that were supposed to go to those schools? They can't go there anymore because there are adults living there. When people think about natural disasters, they think immediately of people losing their homes and their livelihood. But for us in SC, we've got to think about that. Usually when disasters happen, schools are the first place people go for



shelter or they are turned into distribution centers. Then, it stops the education of the kids. That's a very big risk in certain countries (#9-M-NOR)

Natural disasters in the host country were not the only threat to program implementation. A respondent from Ethiopia mentioned that inflation could hamper the implementation of programs and projects:

The other risk is the inflation that pops up every now and then in project proposals and in the annual plan. You know your budget for the project period, which means that you know how much you can spend each year. But inflation is high in Ethiopia these days. So, you can't do what you planned given the inflation. (...). If you want to engage in activities which require a huge sum of money, it may mean that you'll have to cut some of your activities or reconsider the number of people that will be involved in the training, for instance. (#20-M-ETH)

In addition, two respondents noted that the security situation the host country could lead to the destruction of infrastructure constructed by SCN (e.g. schools) or interrupt the implementation of ongoing projects. The latter is exemplified by a respondent from Uganda, who said:

(...) for that project in Northern Uganda [Safe return and reintegration of war-affected children], the risk is that the war could break out again. We have had a bit of calm for some time. But there's a potential risk that security is in question, and you cannot do anything. So, there's a much bigger problem. (#18-M-UG)

The construction of the host country as dangerous is noteworthy, since it is the very rationale that justifies SCN's actions. As a rule, all funding applications to which I had access began with an analysis the country context, highlighting the risks to which children are exposed. For instance, a funding application submitted by the Country Office Nepal to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu states:

Discrimination, early marriage, trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, child labour, abduction and recruitment into armed groups and armed force are some of the most prevalent concerns impeding child protection in Nepal (...). Root causes of this abuse, exploitation and violence are power imbalances, especially due to gender

---

inequalities, harmful traditional practices, a weak child protection system, internal conflict and inadequate implementation of laws and policies (SCN 2010c:13)

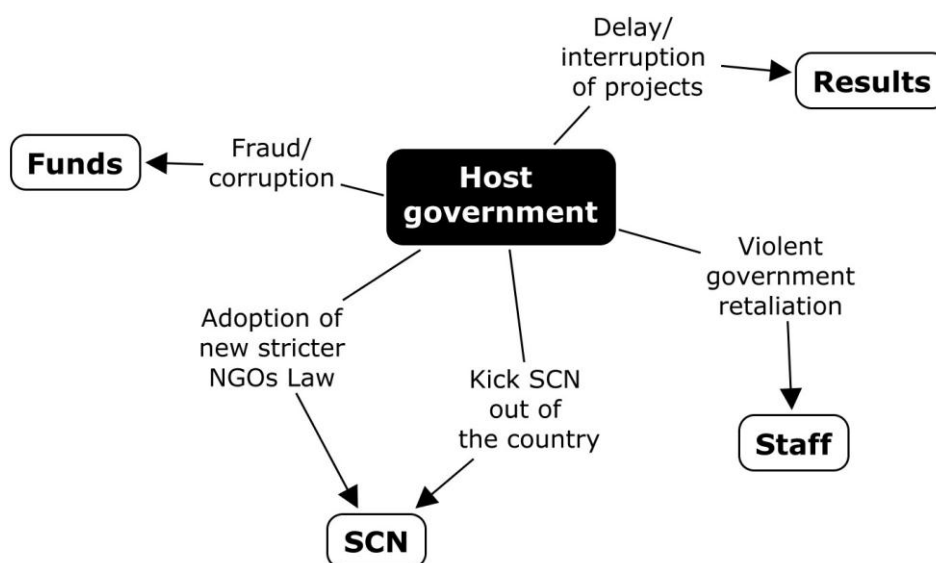
Moreover, SCN's Strategy 2010–2013 indicates that the construction of host countries as dangerous places plays a role in building the organization's image:

Save the Children Norway's brand and position in Norway is based on trust, influence and the ability to attract funds. We will strengthen our position by: (...) showing that we are working in the countries with the greatest need and with those children in the most difficulty, often those who are hardest to reach (SCN 2009:8).

#### **5.1.4 The host government**

SCN engages with a range of governmental agencies at the national and local levels in implementing programs and projects for children. These include ministries of education, health and justice; human rights institutions with statutory powers; judges; police and social welfare institutions. As a respondent from the head office remarked: "It is a little bit unique in the SC family that we are the ones that work with governments. Not everybody does that" (#9-M-NOR). However, as many respondents noted, the host government can be a risky player to deal with. Thirteen respondents (six from head office and seven from various country offices) provided examples of risks in which the host government was constructed as a potential source of danger to the results of programs, funds, staff and SCN as an organization (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Relationships of risk – host government as risk object



Six respondents (two from head office and four from country offices in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Nepal, and Uganda) identified the introduction of new regulations on NGOs by the host government as a risk for SCN, since that could restrict the organization's capacity to operate in the country. In their construction of the host government as a risk object, two respondents from Cambodia and Nepal observed that SCN does not have control over the government actions toward NGOs. The respondent from Nepal said:

As an external organization, we have no political influence, or way of protecting ourselves from changes in government policy towards INGOs, really... The only people that actually support us are the bilateral donors, meaning the embassies (...). Those who are interested in development, they may defend us, to some extent. But there could be restrictions placed on us by the governments. They may say that you can't use certain type of funding or that all funding should go through the government (...). That's one risk. (#14-F-NE)

Three respondents mentioned the case of Ethiopia, where this risk became reality when the government adopted the Charities and Societies Proclamation Law in 2009. NGOs that receive more than ten percent of their income from foreign sources are no longer allowed to engage in human rights and advocacy activities in Ethiopia. According to two respondents from head office, the

---

introduction of stricter regulations on NGOs ranks high on the political agenda of several countries. As one respondent explained,

[This] has to do with a paradigm shift in some countries where they say: “Hang on a minute; we don’t want western NGOs dictating how our human right legislations are going to be.” Perhaps, in some case, governments are getting worried (...) because the civil society and our work are always linked to the opposition in many countries. (#9-M-NOR)

Four respondents (two from head office and two from Cambodia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) argued that working with the host government could pose a risk to the achievement of expected results. In their view, elections bring the risk of staff turnover in the government, which could delay or even interrupt projects implemented in partnership with governmental agencies. As the respondent from Cambodia explained:

(...) and some risks are related to the authorities. For example, we have a project with the local government. But then, election comes and they change personnel. (...) And then, when the new employees arrive, they need to obtain orientations from the national government and they have no time to continue the operations with us. So, our activities may stop. (#19-F-CAM)

A respondent from Ethiopia argued that lack of capacity or commitment of governmental partners could delay program implementation:

Their main duty [government staff] is to deliver whatever is given to them by their bosses, the authorities. They have a lot of things on their table. They give preference and priority of implementing what they are supposed to do, what they get paid for. So, sometimes, it happens that [SCN’s] projects and plans are executed late. (...) That’s because of capacity; the necessary human resources are not in place; or commitment. It could be for different reasons. It depends from one partner to another. (#20-M-ETH)

Of the nine respondents who identified partners as source of risk to SCN’s funds (see section 5.1.2), two respondents, from Uganda and Nepal, emphasized that cooperating with governmental agencies entails the risk that project funds may be misused by the authorities. The respondent from Uganda

---

explained that her country office has decided to stop supporting governmental partners financially:

We have previously cooperated with governmental departments. But because of so much corruption, the people out in the field, they all recommended that we stop giving money to governmental partners. We can have them as a partner in other ways, but our relationship should not involve transfer of money. The management [i.e. country director] has especially adopted this position. (#13-F-UG)

Four respondents (two from head office and two from Uganda) spoke of the risks involved in openly criticizing the host government. According to respondents, two objects at risk could be affected by a negative response from the government to an advocacy campaign: SCN as an organization, and the safety of staff. Three respondents mentioned that speaking out against violations of children's rights or corruption could trigger hostile reactions from the government, culminating with SCN's being forced to leave the country. Two respondents from head office argued that working in a country where INGOs are perceived as political enemies or where advocacy work is prohibited entails a choice between helping beneficiaries on the ground, and raising the SCN's voice against violations. One of them explained:

You work there under this frame and you keep a low profile when it comes to political issues; or you choose to not work in the country and raise your voice. (...) It's not that we are not critical. But since our choice is to be there and work with the people that are our target group, that is the choice we make. That is why we have to be careful (...). If you are somewhere, you have to work under that frame; otherwise you are just kicked out. (#15-F-NOR)

Another respondent from head office added that SCN personnel in the country could be the target of violence as a result of speaking out against violations: "all country offices have national staff and they cannot leave the ground when things get bad". (#6-F-NOR)

## 5.2 Objects at risk

Objects at risk are considered valuable and worth protecting (Corvellec 2010, Boholm and Corvellec 2011). They serve as the background against which risk relationships are constructed, since “there is no risk unless something of value is considered to be at stake” (Corvellec 2010:145). In the examples provided by respondents, five objects were perceived as being “at risk”: staff, children, reputation, funds, and the results of projects and programs. As one respondent noted: “There are so many different types of risk. You know, it depends on what you think is put at risk, isn’t it? So, you have risk to personnel; you have risk to a project; risk to people [beneficiaries] or risk to reputation” (#16-F-NOR). In the following sections, I describe the risk relationships built around each of these objects, focusing on how they were constructed as valuable.

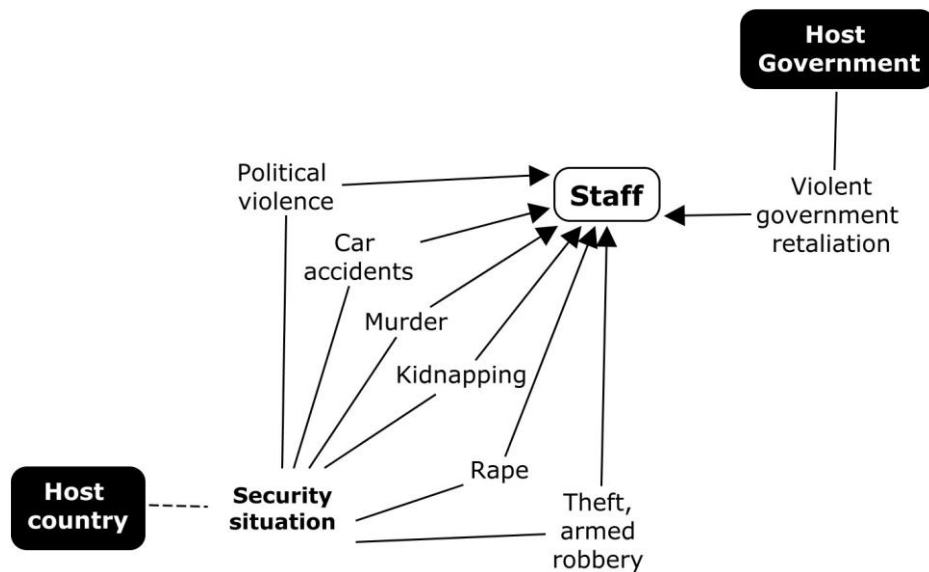
It should be noted that the interview material on objects at risk was somewhat less rich. There is something self-evident about objects at risk, as most respondents did not feel the need to explain *why* they saw staff, children, reputation, funds, and the results of programs as being valuable. Interestingly, when I asked respondents about what risks SCN should *not* take, they proceeded to explain why these objects were valuable or deserved to be protected. Another reason for lack of data is that I had not designed the interview questionnaire in light of the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011), as I was not familiar with it at that stage.

### 5.2.1 Staff

According to Boholm and Corvellec (2011), no object is inherently risky or valuable. On the contrary, different identities can be granted to the same object, depending on the context and the person asked. This is the case with “staff,” which was constructed both as a risk object and an object at risk by respondents. On one hand, employees could put children, funds, and SCN’s

reputation at stake. On the other hand, they could get hurt on the job, even killed. In total, 12 respondents (eight from head office and three from country offices in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, and Zimbabwe) provided examples of risks in which SCN personnel were identified as an object at risk (see Figure 10).

*Figure 10: Relationships of risk – staff as an object at risk*



Nearly all of these respondents singled out the host country as a source of danger to SCN staff. They saw employees as being exposed to a range of perils: car accidents, kidnapping, theft, murder, political arrest, etc. As a respondent from Bosnia-Herzegovina said: “Another risk factor here is also personal risk, that could be either war or... driving in the roads in the Balkans even that is a risk in itself.” (#4-F-SEE)

Objects at risk are usually constructed around ideas of “value, loss, vulnerability and need for protection” (Boholm and Corvellec 2011:180). The latter was stressed by a respondent from head office, who spoke of the importance of risk management in SCN:

There are two levels to it [importance of risk management]. One is staff, our own staff. I mean, they need to be protected. So, there’s always this

---

issue of when to withdraw or all those management issues, which is of course absolutely important. We need to protect staff! (#3-M-NOR)

SCN's responsibility to safeguard staff is also specifically mentioned in the organization's Human Resources Policy (SCN 2007a:5)

In the case where external risks and threats could cause serious injury or even death of personnel on duty, SCN has a special responsibility to evaluate the risks staff members are exposed to, and to seek to reduce or eliminate such risks.

However, as noted by #3-M-NOR and two other head office employees, there is a tension between the responsibility to protect staff and SCN's mandate to act in the best interests of children:

If we consider risk very strictly to be threats towards health or security, then we [SCN] like everybody else in this sector are very vulnerable to war and humanitarian crises. We want to be there, but they are also the most risky situations (#3-M-NOR).

According to another respondent, SCN often encounters a similar dilemma in advocacy work:

We will do what we can to save children's lives, sometimes even if that means going about our work very carefully and quietly. But other times, realizing the need to speak out if massive violations of children's rights are taking place, (...) but you really need to take in consideration the personal safety of people. All [country] offices have national staff and national staff cannot leave the ground when the things get bad. (#10-F-NOR)

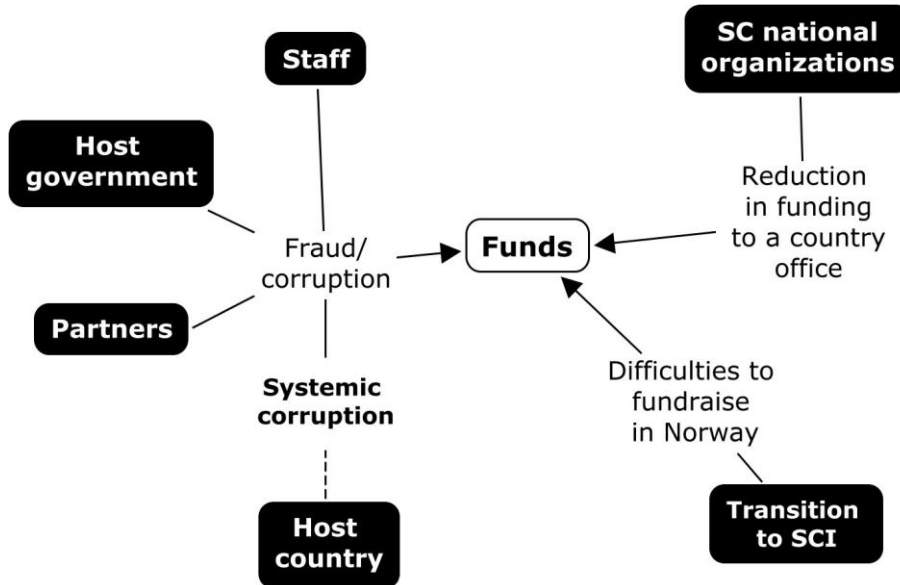
### **5.2.2 Funds**

In their examples of organizational risks, 14 respondents (seven from head office and seven from country offices) constructed funds as an object at risk. Most of them spoke of the possibility of cases of corruption and fraud involving SCN's employees or local partners, especially in countries where corruption is pervasive. However, some employees also mentioned the risk of lack of funding. In total, respondents constructed six risk objects: staff,



partners, the host country, the host government, the transition to SCI, and SC national organizations (see Figure 11).

*Figure 11: Relationships of risk – funds as an object at risk*



Five respondents (three from head office and two from Nepal and Uganda) were concerned with the risk of not being able to obtain funds to run the organization. Two employees from head office established relationships of risk between SCN’s capacity to raise funds in Norway and the transition of country offices to SCI management. They feared that donors might stop making donations if they disapproved of the merger or stopped seeing SCN as a Norwegian organization. As one respondent explained:

We are a Norwegian organization. Our name is Redd Barna and it has been for 65 years. It will stay so, that’s what we think. If SCI says that everyone has to be called SC-Norway, SC-Sweden or whatever — I don’t think that will happen — but there is a risk that in our domestic marketing we will lose that feeling that we are a Norwegian organization. (...). If our donors feel that SCN is part of some international global “thing” that they don’t understand, many will stop donating money. The same exercise applies to Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To get them to understand that there is an added value in giving money to Redd Barna and not directly to SCI; that there is an added value in having staff in Oslo, if we are all working through one program unit. (#6-F-NOR)

---

Looking at funding problems from the perspective of country offices, three respondents identified a reduction in the amount of funds channeled by SCN and other SC organizations as a risk. A respondent from Nepal explained:

One of the main risks could be if the funding level decreases drastically. As the major portion of SC Nepal funding comes from different SC members, if they withdraw their support this will have a significant effect on the on-going programs of SC Nepal. (#8-F-NE)

In constructing funds as an object at risk, six respondents explicitly mentioned one of the following: the vulnerability of funds; SCN's moral responsibility to put donations to a good use; and donors' accountability requirements and sanctions applied to NGOs in case of misuse of funds. Respondents who emphasized the vulnerability of funds to fraud or corruption tended to stress that the host country and its government are corrupt. As a respondent from head office argued:

If you look at Afghanistan, the risk is that it can be pretty far from Kabul to some of those local partners in village X, in a country where gifts and kickbacks are a normal part of the economy. (...) There is a very high risk, actually. You only need one or two corrupt people in that chain of money-or-services transferring to have something corrupt happening. (#15-F-NOR)

Another respondent from head office emphasized the moral character of SCN's mission. She said:

We should have zero tolerance to the exploitation or abuse of children, since they are our target group. The same applies to financial transactions. We should be good stewards of the resources that we're using. (#10-F-NOR)

Other respondents focused on donors' accountability requirements. For example, a respondent from head office argued: "The standards that are required of us are phenomenon. (...) We have to provide traceable information on almost every single Norwegian crown that flows through our system." (#9-M-NOR) Another employee, from Uganda, added:

---

We are required by the donors to report even on suspicions sometimes, not just any fraud that has happened. We are supposed to report on suspicions, even if it proves that that suspicion is not correct. Right now, all the donors... USAID is asking us to report on any fraud almost right away... Norad is asking us to report on this right away. (#23-F-UG)

Three respondents from Oslo explained that the Norad and the MFA can apply sanctions against SCN in case of financial irregularities. They criticized the Norwegian government's zero-tolerance policy on corruption, arguing that it transfers all liability to the grant recipient if something goes wrong. One of these respondents said:

We need to report to the donors that we have a suspicion of fraudulent actions. So, if it turns out that the money stolen was from Norad, then, we need to pay that back to Norad. (...) We are discussing a lot with Norad and MFA now, and we've been doing that for the last eight years at least. If the MFA asks us to do work in a country that is among the top ten most corrupt countries in the world, then, they need to understand that both of us have to take that risk. It's not just SCN that has to take that risk. (...) We have not yet managed to come to that point that MFA and Norad will share the risk with us. They still say that the risk is only on our side. (#22-M-NO)

Another respondent pointed out an inconsistency in donor behavior: donors expect SCN to have good control systems to prevent corruption, but at the same time to have low overheads. This creates a dilemma for SCN:

That's one of the big paradoxes. On one hand you're asked to work in those countries. You'd like to work in those areas because that's where people have the most need, but at the same time they are the most risky. The paradox is that you're asked to keep your administrative costs at the lowest level. At the same time, if you really want to make sure that the funds really reach its target group, and are implemented properly you have to have a lot of control mechanisms; and those control mechanisms are expensive. So that's always a dilemma that you need to take into consideration. (#15-F-NOR)

### 5.2.3 Results

During the interviews, SCN's employees were particularly concerned about the achievement of planned results. In their examples of organizational risks, 14 respondents (six from head office and eight from country offices) depicted the results of programs and projects implemented by SCN as an object at risk. Although the perceived sources of danger varied, the relationships of risk involved one of the following outcomes: temporary or permanent interruption of activities, delays, overspending, and reduction of project size or scope.

Most respondents provided examples of risk in which the host country, the host government, partners and staff posed a threat to programs. However, a few of them constructed different risk objects, such as innovation and funds (see Figure 12). Two respondents, from Ethiopia and Russia, argued that innovation is inherently risky. When SCN implements innovative programs and projects for children, there will always be a risk of failing to deliver the expected results. The respondent from Ethiopia explained:

When you want to try something new, there's risk involved in it. It may not work. (...) The fact that it's new poses a challenge in itself. So, while you encourage your partners to try something new, it is likely that risk will be there, risk of not being successful. (#20-M-ETH)

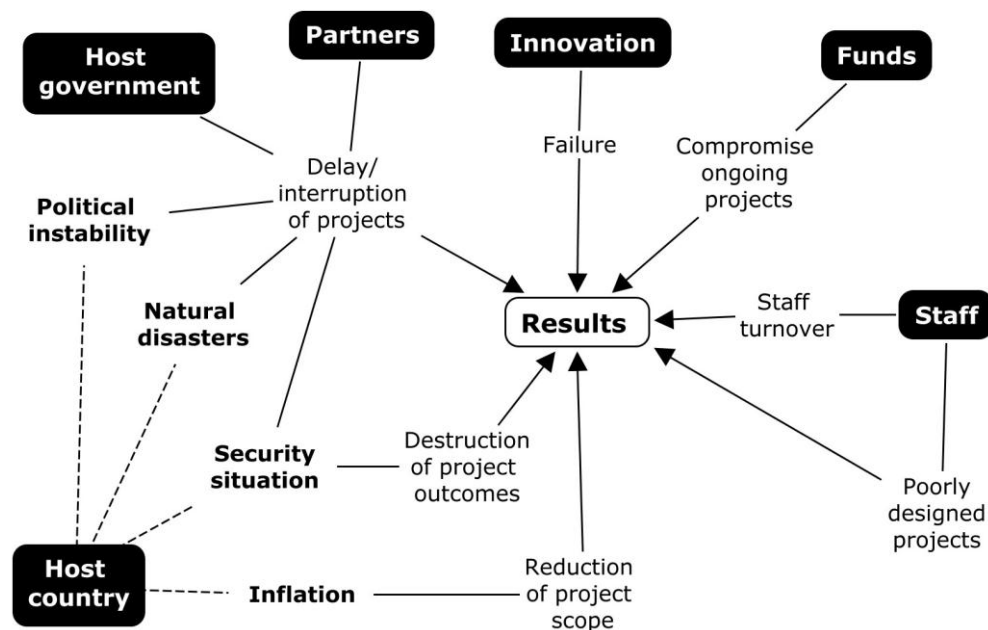
Interestingly, a respondent from head office provided an example in which the availability of funds could pose a risk to the results of programs and projects implemented by SCN. In his view, accepting funds for a project in a thematic area where SCN does not have expertise could lead to failure, as well as compromising other ongoing initiatives. He argued:

If we see that there is a donor that has a great amount of money and requires a certain focus that would take resources from ongoing projects; or that requires focus on a thematic area where we do not have expertise, I would be more reluctant to say yes. Even though I see that there's a great need [for beneficiaries]. I'm not sure if it is worth it. Because if we get the funds, but we cannot deliver and we're not good at it, it is not within our core competences, what is the point of

receiving those funds? That's actually something that I had on Russia. The Minister of Justice wanted us to do something which is not totally out of scope, but outside our core competence and expertise, and it was not what we wanted to do and it was not in line with our strategies. Then I said: No, thank you. Even though we lost a big potential donor on that. We've been supported by them for many years, but since 2009 or 2010 we stopped receiving that funding. (...) If you risk being less focused, if you risk not doing what you're good at, then, it is not worth it. (#1-M-NOR)

Therefore, even a valuable object such as funds can be constructed as a source of danger under certain circumstances. This example of risk also reveals a tension between delivering on results and securing access to funding: SCN prioritized results, but lost the financial support of the donor.

Figure 12: Relationships of risk – results as an object at risk



To construct results as an object at risk, two employees from head office argued that achieving results is important for the Norwegian state donors. For instance, one of them declared: “Norad is very tough on results” (#15-F-NOR). The other respondent explained that SCN has committed to thoroughly document results achieved in order to secure a more flexible agreement with Norad:

---

It is more flexible. In the sense that we've sort of passed a test—we could call it a test—that we've delivered reports to their satisfaction. So now they've given us the core agreement, which means that we deliver very small applications and very small annual reports. But every fifth year it is the opposite. It is very strict on how to document results in order to continue that kind of agreement. It gives flexibility, but they do expect a lot of us in terms of documenting results. (#3-M-NOR)

Nevertheless, seven respondents justified the importance of achieving results on the basis of SCN's mandate to act “in the best interests of children” (#4-F-SEE). For instance, a respondent from Nepal explained that one of the main risks involved in implementing projects is to have a bad design, as that could hinder the capacity to benefit children. She argued:

The real risks lies there, if the project is poorly designed, insufficient budget, or wrong staffing levels, etc. It's difficult to turn it around. It can be turned around, in negotiation with donors. “We got some design mistakes here and we need to change it.” But it slows the project down. It may mean that we realize after six months or a year that we need to re-adjust things. That means we're not benefiting children as effectively as if we have done better on the design. (#14-F-NE)

The importance of delivering results for the beneficiaries' sake was also highlighted by a respondent from head office:

So, of course, imagine the consequences for the people involved, partners and the beneficiaries if we do not manage to deliver due to some risk (...). Of course, our reason for being is that we manage to deliver (#3-M-NOR).

Similarly, a respondent from Bosnia-Herzegovina emphasized that delivering on results is what justifies SCN's existence. She argued: “We are here as an organization to add value to the chain, to the processes. So, that we can justify why we are here and we can improve the situation for children” (#4-F-SEE).

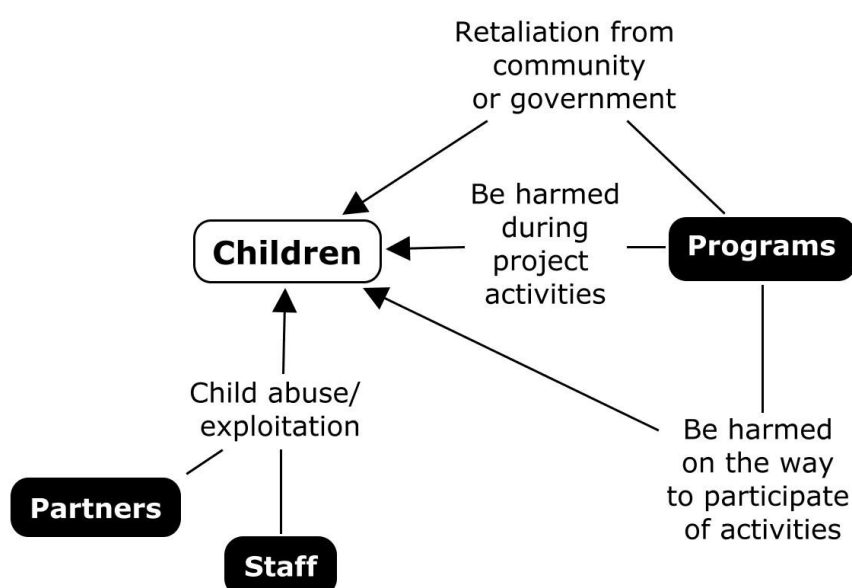
Interestingly, the achievement of results was also the background against which many respondents defined the concept of risk. For instance, when asked “What is risk?” a respondent from head office replied: “Not being able to do what you promised to do, basically, in relation to our business. So, if you say

that you can do something as SC, you better be able to do it” (#10-F-NOR). And a respondent from Bosnia-Herzegovina defined risk as: “[U]nwanted results or consequences of what we have planned or what we have promised the donors to achieve” (#4-F-SEE).

### 5.2.4 Children

As a children’s rights organization, SCN envisions “a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation” (SCN 2009:2). In the pursuit of this vision, the organization engages with children through long-term development programs, emergency response, and advocacy work. Despite the good intentions, the interaction between SCN and beneficiaries might also cause harm to the latter. In their examples of organizational risks, seven respondents (five from head office and two from country offices in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cambodia) constructed children as an object at risk. In their view, SCN’s target group was vulnerable to the misconduct of staff members and to adverse consequences of programs and activities carried out by the organization (see Figure 13).

*Figure 13: Relationships of risk – children as an object at risk*



---

Five respondents provided examples of risks in which SCN staff could put the well-being of children in jeopardy. Their main concern was sexual abuse, which was described as “extremely serious” (#15-F-NOR) and “the worst case for SCN” (#22-M-NO). As a respondent from head office said:

The worst that can happen is that children are getting abused. That’s really a high risk. (...) It’s high because of the children’s lives after that has happen. Maybe a person abuses children. That’s really the worst case for SCN. It’s not that bad if the same person steals NOK 1000 from the cash box. (#22-M-NO)

Another respondent from head office mentioned that cases of child abuse could also involve local partners that implement projects on SCN’s behalf:

The Child Safeguarding Protocol is a very serious aspect of the country offices because they have a lot of partners. They have to follow up all the partners as well. This should be put into the agreements for the partners: comply and following the same rules and precautions, (...) just like we do. (#5-F-NOR)

Most respondents who mentioned the risk of children being abused by staff members argued that it would have other severe consequences for SCN, such as loss of members, funding, and reputation.

Three respondents singled out yet another risk object: the programs and projects implemented by SCN. In their view, children could be affected in two ways: they could get hurt while participating in project activities; and they could suffer harm or retaliation for their involvement with the organization. For instance, a respondent from head office noted that children and their families could suffer reprisals for being involved in projects that deal with culturally-controversial topics. He said:

Culturally... What are the obstacles? Which risks do we run when we try to challenge a child-harmful traditional practice? What is the risk for those involved, children and communities? What do they risk by helping us? (#3-M-NOR)



---

A respondent from Cambodia argued that children could suffer retaliation from their families or the government for voicing their opinion through SCN's advocacy campaigns. She observed:

We conduct advocacy activities and we involve children in these activities. So, we need to think about their safety. It is a risk. It could be, for instance, that they'll have problems with their family. It could be they'll have problems with the local authorities. It could be that they'll have problems with the government. That's why we think about the risks, which risks could happen to the children if they are involved in our activities. (#19-F-CAM)

The same respondent mentioned that children could encounter threats on their way to participate in SCN activities:

If they are involved in our activities, it could be risky. Like, they could go missing or suffer an accident along the road. So, there's the risk for the security of the children. So, when we see that risk, we need to consider a way to mitigate the risk. For example, when we conduct a meeting at one place, we need to find out the exact place where children feel safe. Also, if the children come from other areas and it could be risky along the road, so we need to have an adult accompanying the children or maybe have our staff to bring the children. (...) But actually during that time, there's another risk, that the adult might abuse the children. There is that kind of risk, even with the closest person to the child, like the father or an uncle. (#19-F-CAM)

In their construction of children as an object at risk, five respondents invoked the moral character of SCN's mission. A respondent from head office argued that protecting children as an essential aspect of the organization's ethic code:

We have to take some risks, but there's a bottom line. We should not risk the safety and well-being of children and we should not, of course, risk our staff. I think that's the ultimate risk that we need to stop if that happens. Of course, it's our ethical standard. (#3-M-NOR)

Another respondent, from Bosnia-Herzegovina, stressed SCN's commitment to the third article of the UN the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that the best interests of children should be a primary consideration in all actions concerning to them. This respondent argued: "For us it is an overall

---

principle that whatever we do, it should be in the interests of children. For me that's also a very leading guideline for managing risks or problems" (#4-F-SEE). Consequently, as an employee from head office said, "we [SCN] should have zero tolerance of exploitation or abuse of children, since they are our target group" (#10-F-NOR).

When discussing risks to children, two respondents emphasized the intrinsic vulnerability of children. A respondent from head office explained:

Our soft spot is that we work with children. They need more protection than adults. We have an extra responsibility to protect children. (...)We should not risk the safety and well-being of children. (#3-M-NOR)

Interestingly, the construction of children as an object at risk is the very rationale of SCN's existence and actions. SCN's Strategy 2010-2013 begins with a statement about the perils to which children are exposed in the world:

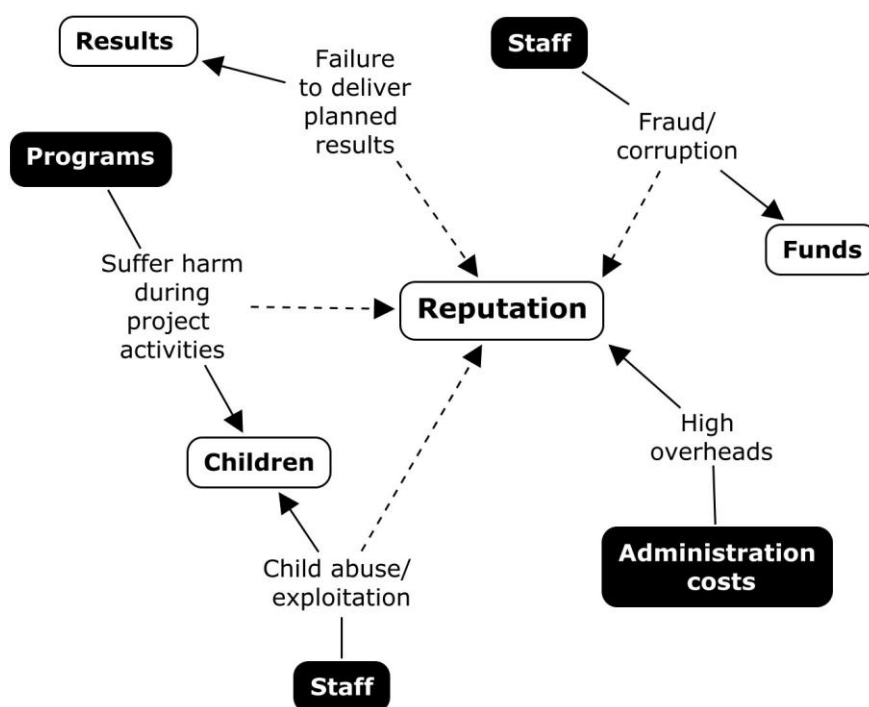
Every year more than nine million children below the age of five will die, largely from preventable causes. 75 million children will grow up without education and millions of children will have their most basic rights breached in that they will become victims of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation (SCN 2009:1).

### **5.2.5 Reputation**

In their examples of organizational risks, nine respondents (six from head office and three from country offices) constructed SCN's reputation as an object at risk. They were especially concerned with how donors, the general public in Norway and children perceive the organization. Respondents felt that almost anything that could go wrong with the organization would have a negative effect on SCN's reputation. The organization could acquire a bad reputation if employees misbehave, if programs and project are not successful, if funds are misused, if beneficiaries are harmed, if administrative costs get too high.

SCN's reputation was "caught in the collateral damage" in several examples of organizational risk provided by respondents. Put differently, the organization's image would be affected if other objects at risk were harmed, such as children, results, and funds (see Figure 14). However, none of the respondents identified risks for SCN staff as a risk for the organization's reputation.

*Figure 14: Relationships of risk – reputation as an object at risk*



Nearly all respondents who mentioned risks for children also emphasized the negative consequences for SCN's reputation as a children's rights organization. Most of them were particularly concerned with child abuse. A respondent from head office stated that a case of child abuse involving SCN personnel would be even worse than corruption:

The biggest risk would be examples of child abuse in which it was discovered that we didn't have good enough systems to detect it and routines to deal with it. I think that [child abuse] is the major risk to SCN's reputation as a child organization, even worse than corruption because corruption is everywhere and everybody knows that there is corruption. I think most people also know that there is abuse of children [in the aid industry], but it would be devastating for SCN as an

---

organization if we could not document that we have good systems to avoid and reduce the risk of child abuse. (#5-F-NOR)

Another respondent from head office noted that harming a beneficiary would be a hard blow to SCN's reputation because the organization carries the responsibility to protect children, as enshrined in its very name. She said:

Every year we give a huge outdoor concert for children on the 10th of December, the Nobel Peace Prize concert for children. There are about 4000 children. It's a public concert in front of the city hall. There is a tram that goes by. There is the traffic. (...) What would happen if a child was seriously hurt, or fell in the sea and drowned? I don't know. I'm not part of that event. But something I know for sure is that it would be something we would have to handle really well in order to people to understand. Because they'll say "You went to SCN's event and you drowned. How's that for saving children's lives?" So, it's on our name. (#6-F-NOR)

According to two respondents, reputation is also directly connected to the results of programs and projects implemented by SCN. In their view, risks that affect the achievement of planned results will also affect SCN's reputation. As a respondent from Uganda summed it up: "You risk a bad reputation if you don't do a project well" (#13-F-UG). A respondent from Bosnia-Herzegovina added that delivering on results is especially important for SCN's image with donors:

I sit here [Bosnia-Herzegovina] and I plan a project for the MFA. I say that these are the objectives and results that I would like to propose. (...) That's the reputation of SCN as a whole, and not just us here saying that these are the results that we will guarantee or we will strive for. [Risks are] also related to project delivery, which is of course important for our donors, including the MFA. (#4-F-SEE)

Two respondents explicitly linked reputation to funds. They argued that cases of fraud and corruption could damage SCN's reputation, especially if employees were directly involved. As a respondent from head office explained, "If one of our staff members runs off with a lot of money, that's a risk. If we couldn't prevent that, it would come back to the whole organization." (#10-F-NOR). The relationship between corruption and

---

reputation loss is also emphasized in the SCN Program Handbook (2010e:2): “Fraud has a severe negative impact on our organisational culture and on our reputation in media and among donors.”

Two respondents constructed yet another risk object: administration costs. In their view, spending a large amount of funds on administration and fundraising costs could jeopardize SCN’s reputation, especially with donors. According to a respondent from Nepal:

We may say that our overhead costs are getting too high. Ok, that is a risk, in the sense that a number of donors don’t want our overhead costs to be high. We don’t, we want get as much money we can to children. So, it’s a challenge that we have to deal with. We may get negative feedback from donors, and we may get negative publicity if we seem to have overheads that are too high. (#14-F-NE)

Being perceived as an organization with high overheads can make donors less willing to fund SCN, as another respondent noted:

Money basically should go to programs. There is a percentage of administration and that percentage should be as low as possible. If the donors see that we’re using 20 percent in administration, they will give the money to some else that only has 17 percent. They [donors] would like the money to go to beneficiaries. (#7-F-NOR)

In constructing reputation as an object at risk, five respondents explained that a good public image is a valuable asset for SCN, because it helps the organization to obtain funding. As a respondent from head office summed up:

Reputation is what we live on, for people to give money. We have a great reputation here. Obviously reputation is also another level of risk. (...) We cannot afford to make many mistakes. We have a great name, so we can afford to make small mistakes. (#6-F-NOR)

According to another respondent from head office, reputation is matter of trust. A case of child abuse or corruption would cast doubt on whether the organization deserves to be trusted by donors and beneficiaries. She explained:

---

Risk is a matter of protecting your reputation, as well. (...) If you get a very bad case of child abuse or corruption that does crop up in the media from time to time, for example, you lose trust from donors, the public and children. That's not possible, that should not be possible for Save the Children Norway, given the objectives that we have (...) A NGO with a mission like ours can only survive if we have the trust of the people that want to support us, and of the children we want to support. So, it goes both ends of the organization. We will not be able to assist children, if they don't trust us to do that job well, at the end of the programming. The same applies to donors. Donors won't give us money if they don't trust us to do a good job or if something goes wrong. (#10-F-NOR)

While some respondents spoke of the utility of reputation, others emphasized its vulnerability. For instance, a respondent from head office recalled the old adage that it takes a lifetime to build a good reputation, but one minute to lose it. She said: "(...) the reputation that has been built over the years, being trusted by children that we work with in the programs and by the donors. The biggest risk is that you can lose it very quickly, very easily, with just one event" (#10-F-NOR). The same respondent indicated that SCN loses reputation when what the organization says does not match what it actually does. She argued:

If it was showed that children were being exploited in our programs, whether sexually or by other means; using children labor or something of that nature. In another words, if we're not doing the job we're saying we're doing, then, that's a risk. (#10-F-NOR)

Another respondent added that even a bad decision could put SCN's reputation at stake:

I think every decision made by the senior management team should be seen in the light of: Will that attract any critical media? It is because we need to... I mean, our responsibility is to our donors and we really need to show them that any decision was well-founded, smart and good. We must avoid making bad decisions. (#6-F-NOR)

Interestingly, some respondents indicated that preserving SCN's reputation may come into conflict with protecting other objects deemed of value, which creates dilemmas for SCN. For instance, a respondent from head office explained that SCN could risk its reputation by asking permission to use

earmarked donations for a different disaster, even when an assessment of beneficiaries' needs would justify spending the money elsewhere. If SCN follows its mandate and helps those who need the most, the organization might end up damaging its reputation:

We fundraise for emergencies and most of the time we will fundraise really hard to reach an appeal target. (...). In some areas or circumstance, people just gave and gave and gave because they saw the picture live on TV. They saw it [the Japanese tsunami] just wrecking everything in its path (...). SC is spending the money, but not as quickly as it is coming in. There's more money for Japan then, for instance, for the Horn of Africa, according to the people's needs. Because in Japan the government is strong (...) they are taking care of their own citizens. SC is spending money (...), but the need is less in Japan than in the Horn of Africa. Here's a risk assessment. How do you say to your donors that gave money for SC to use in Japan that we have given it a second thought and Japan now has enough money? How can we use the money that you gave us for Japan in the Horn of Africa without ruining our reputation? "Why did you ask us for that money for Japan if there was no need?" (...) What's the risk? The risk is reputation. Why people should give us money in the future, if we suddenly turn around and say "That was nice of you to give us all that money, but we really don't want to spend it there." (#6-F-NOR)

Another respondent, from Nepal, spoke of the dilemma between maintaining low overheads to safeguard reputation, and running the organization:

[T]o run good monitoring and evaluation, to design good projects, to provide good materials on communication, it requires money which is not directly given to children, but it's used in a sense to operate the organization. So, how do you balance that? How much should be going to direct programs to children? How much should go to the organization? (#14-F-NE)

### 5.3 Summary of findings

Drawing on the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011), I have deconstructed the organizational risks identified by SCN employees in their interviews with me. This has revealed an intricate web of risk objects, objects

---

at risk, and relationships of risk, as depicted in Figure 15. It should be noted that these objects emerged from my interpretation of respondents' answers rather than an *a priori* classification.

One noteworthy finding was that the “building blocks” beneath the plethora of organizational risks identified by SCN's employees were remarkably similar. Regardless of their working location, area of function or hierarchical level, all respondents constructed relationships of risk around four main risk objects: staff, partners, the host government, and the host country; and five main objects at risk: staff, children, reputation, funds, and the results of projects and programs carried out by the organization. These represent what employees perceive as dangerous for SCN and what they consider valuable for the organization, respectively.

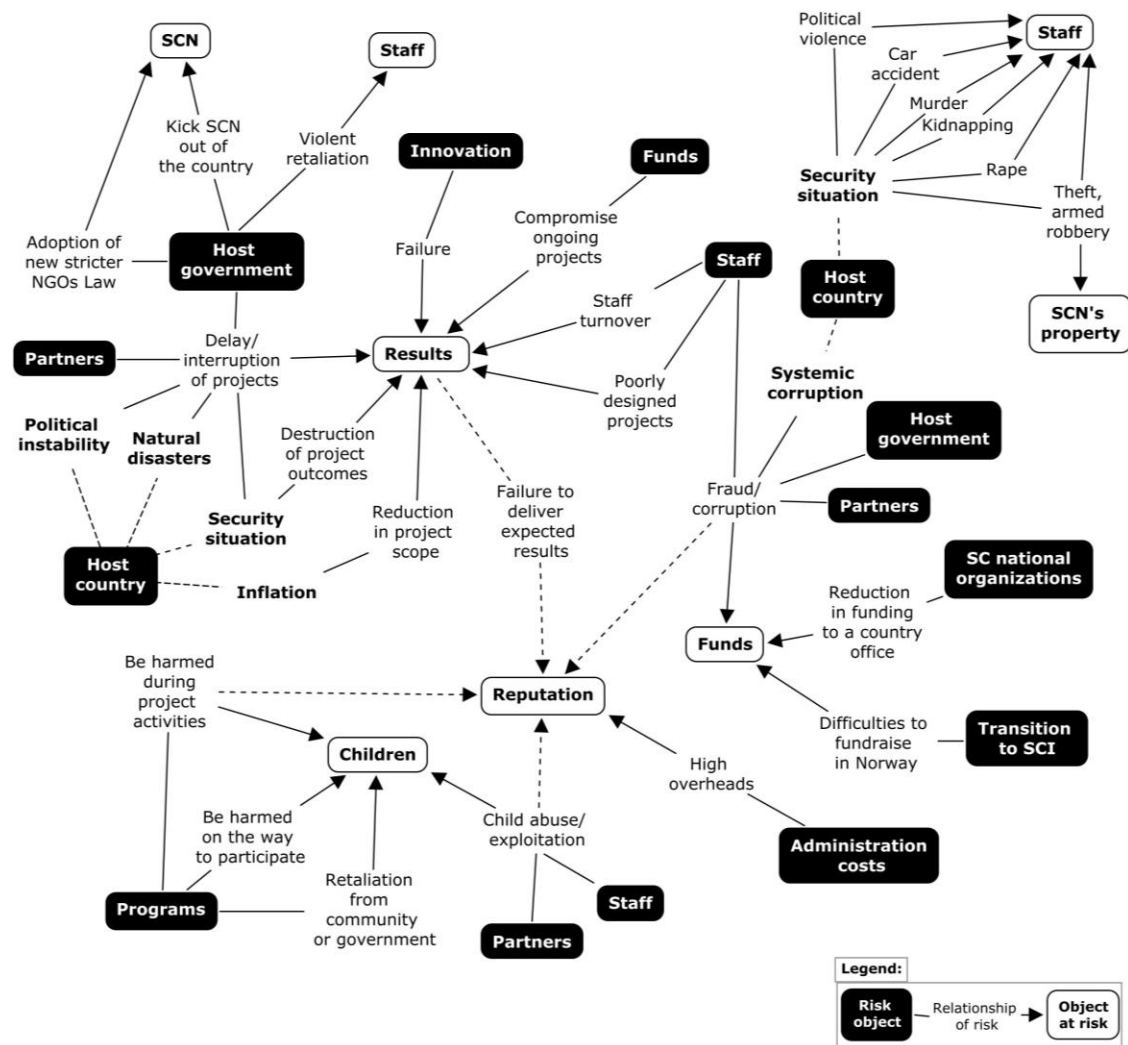
Some objects were conceptualized both as risk object and an object at risk, often by the same respondent. For instance, several respondents saw staff as a source of danger to children, funds, and the results of projects; but also as vulnerable to the security situation in the host country or actions of the host governments against SCN. This finding corroborates with the view expressed by Boholm and Corvellec (2011): that the identity of risk objects and objects at risk is not fixed. In fact, as we have seen, even valuable objects like funds, programs, and staff may, under certain circumstances, be perceived as risky. Interestingly, among all the objects singled out by respondents, children and reputation were always depicted as valuable and worth protecting. Further, “results” was never constructed as a risk object; however, the implementation of programs and projects was described as a potential source of harm to children.

Moreover, the construction of something as risky often involved accentuating certain characteristics of the object. For examples, host countries were deemed insecure, prone to natural disaster, corrupt, or politically instable; partners were described as uncontrollable, lacking capacity or commitment. All such



attributes were highlighted in order to justify their perceived riskiness. This finding is consistent with the relational theory of risk, which posits that labeling something as dangerous or risky “involves downplaying other traits of the object and considering them less significant” (Boholm and Corvellec 2011:179).

Figure 15: Relationships of risk – summary



The construction of the host country, partners, and the host government as risk objects also reveals a curious paradox: even though these objects are “risky,” SCN actively seeks to engage with them. Although respondents stated that local NGOs and host governments could put results and funds in jeopardy, SCN believes that sustainable impact for children can only be achieved when these actors are involved. Additionally, despite the risks involved in operating

in “dangerous” countries, SCN wants to be there, and, as some respondents noted, receives funding to be precisely there. As one respondent from head office summed up: “Risk is part of the reality we deal with” (#15-F-NOR).

And finally, we should note that some respondents directly connected SCN’s reputation to the “well-being” of other objects at risk, such as children, results and funds. If an employee were to be publically implicated in a case of child abuse or exploitation involving beneficiaries, for example, that would severely affect SCN’s credibility as children’s rights organization. Therefore, any risk to children would be a risk to SCN’s public standing. Respondents justified the importance of a good reputation mainly in terms of utility. Being perceived as a trustworthy organization allows SCN to secure access to funding.

In the next chapter, I discuss what these results tell us about how employees form judgments about organizational risks.

## **6. RISK PERCEPTION AND THE PURSUIT OF LEGITIMACY**

In the previous chapter, I deconstructed the organizational risks identified by SCN staff. We saw that all respondents constructed relationships of risk around eight main objects: the results of programs and projects, children, funds, reputation, staff, the host country, the host government, and partners. In this chapter, I draw on new institutionalism (Meyer and Rowan 1977, DiMaggio and Powell 1983) and the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011) to provide a partial explanation for the second research question: How do employees form judgments about organizational risks?

I begin by placing the results of this study in the context of the literature. Then I argue that perceptions of organizational risk among SCN staff derive, although not exclusively, from isomorphic pressures to conform to legitimating rules, conventions, rational myths, and paradigms widespread in the international aid system. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of some limitations of this hypothesis.

### **6.1 Organizational risk perception: beyond practice and context**

Previous studies have identified two important determinants of risk perception in organizational settings: one's position within the organization (Marek *et al.* 1985, Rayner 1986, Hutter 2001, Mohammed 2007); and managerial practice (Corvellec 2010). In this section, I show that neither practice nor working context can explain why all my respondents constructed relationships of risk around the same objects. I will also discuss a key problem with both explanations: that they fail to connect employees' perspectives on risk to the world outside the organization.

---

We begin by examining the results of this study in the light of Corvellec's (2010) practice-immanent view of risk. Based on practice theory and the idea that risk assessments involve a valuation process, Corvellec offers a theoretical explanation for why employees perceive organizational risks as they do. The researcher argues that managerial practices determine what objects are regarded as valuable for the organization, and consequently influence how employees form judgments about organization risk. If we follow this line of thought, SCN's employees construct funds, results, staff, children and reputation as objects at risk because SNC has developed an operational model in which these objects play an important role for the well-being of the organization. If SCN had a different structure or management practices, respondents would have considered other objects to be important and worth protecting, and would therefore have perceived different organizational risks.

Imagine that SCN is an environmental NGO, such as the Greenpeace. Thus, SCN's mission is now to "ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity,"<sup>21</sup> instead of "inspir[ing] breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and achiev[ing] immediate and lasting change in their lives" (SCN 2009:2). Consequently, even though employees may personally consider children to be valuable, protecting the Earth would be essential for the organization to achieve its mission, rather than safeguarding children. In addition, this "Green-SCN" would most likely have a different organizational structure and managerial practices. Let us assume that, like Greenpeace, "Green-SCN" sees using ships in advocacy work as an effective approach. In this case, an employee might conceive the risk that such ships could pollute the seas if cleaning chemicals are not properly disposed of. However, it is unlikely that an employee of the real SCN would imagine such risk. It is not only

---

<sup>21</sup> Greenpeace's mission. [http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/about/faq\\_old/questions-about-greenpeace-in/](http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/about/faq_old/questions-about-greenpeace-in/)

---

because the organization values children instead of oceans, but because SCN does not own any ships.

Corvellec's argument has three main limitations. Firstly, the analysis focuses on the object at risk, by emphasizing the role of value in a risk relationship. However, it fails to theorize the risk object properly. Although the practice-immanent view of risk may help explain why SCN employees see certain objects as being at risk, it does not explain why they construct staff, the host country, the host government and partners as "risky." If risk is a relationship (Boholm and Corvellec 2011), then *both sides* of the equation matter: understanding why one object is conceived as dangerous is as important as understanding why another is constructed as valuable. In fact, it could be argued that there is no risk unless something represents a source of danger. Without a potential source of harm, the objects at risk identified by SCN employees are valuable, but they are not at risk.

Secondly, Corvellec does not examine what shapes managerial practice, although that is a relevant question to ask. If practice determines value, and value determines risk, then any factor that influences managerial practice will have an effect on risk perception. And thirdly, because the analysis does not take into account the operating context of Skånetrafiken, the organization appears to exist in a social vacuum. In reality, "no organization is an island unto itself" (Smith 1999:241). For instance, is it possible to imagine an organization operating under a capitalist regime that does not consider its financial resources important and worth protecting, regardless of its field or operational model? Here it should be noted that Corvellec does not claim that practice is the one and only determinant of risk perception. Moreover, given the length of his article, the author may simply have run out of space to discuss factors that affect managerial practice.

If we turn now to the literature on organizational risk perception in NGOs, I have, as mentioned in Chapter 2, found only one study that investigates

---

perceptions of organizational risk among NGO workers<sup>22</sup> (Mohammed 2007, 2010). Based on a case study of MASH Trust, a healthcare NGO from New Zealand, Mohammed found evidence that perceptions of organizational risk are contingent upon employees' immediate working context, especially hierarchy and functional area. These findings are consistent with research on occupational health and safety, where studies have demonstrated the existence of different perspectives on risk and safety within a single organization, and that these perceptions are patterned according to one's location within the organization (Marek *et al.* 1985, Rayner 1986, Cox and Flin 1998, Pidgeon 1998, Hutter 2001).

However, as we have seen, employees from a range of different working locations, areas of functions and hierarchical levels at SCN constructed relationships of risk around the same objects. Of course, one might argue that ultimately all respondents share the same "working context," as they work for the same organization. But this cannot explain the similarities in risks described by employees of SCN and MASH Trust. Although the two organizations have distinct missions and organizational structures—SCN is a children's rights organization with country offices in developing countries; MASH Trust is healthcare organization that provides services to people with disabilities through care houses in New Zealand—their employees identified similar risks, including loss of reputation, staff causing harm to beneficiaries, staff being harmed on the job, failure to secure sources of funding, as well as changes in governmental legislation and, political changes.

Although Mohammed produced important evidence of the context-specific nature of organizational risk perception in NGOs, his study failed to take into consideration the fact that organizational settings are neither self-evident nor

---

<sup>22</sup> There are, however, several publications on risk management in the aid industry (see Wilson-Grau 2003, Herman *et al.* 2004, Bertrand and Brown 2006, Grace 2010, Ward and Purdy 2010, Trivunovic *et al.* 2011)

independent of external influences. Focusing mainly on situational determinants of organization risk perception, he treated MASH Trust as if the organization “exist[s] in, but [is] ontologically separate from [its] environment” (Jerrard *et al.* 2008:22). Put differently, his study failed to problematize the context within which organizational perceptions of risk are investigated.

Given the limitations identified above, I will argue that, in order to understand the perception of organizational risk among SCN staff, we need to put isolated risk issues into the context of a larger system, the aid industry (after Douglas 1992:50).

### **6.1.1 Putting risk into a larger context**

“NGOs do not exist in a vacuum” (Xiaoguang and Li 2006). They are not closed systems and cannot be viewed in isolation from what goes on around them (Fowler 1997 cited in Lewis 2001). Development and humanitarian NGOs such as SCN are deeply embedded in their own organizational field, the international aid system or aid industry (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). More than a cluster of interdependent organizations, the aid industry is a “socially constructed world” (Lister 2003:178). In this world, SCN shares a common meaning system with other actors united around development and humanitarian goals.<sup>23</sup>

As an organizational field, the aid industry exerts influence over NGOs (Campion 2002, Rauh 2010), driving them to adopt similar structures, strategies and practices—a process known as isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Deephouse 1996). I have found some signs of isomorphism in SCN. First, like many donors and NGOs in the USA and Europe (Rauh 2010),

---

<sup>23</sup> For example, Northern, Southern, and international NGOs; multilateral and national development agencies; private and public donors; government agencies in developing countries; beneficiaries; and research institutions.

---

the organization uses the Logframe as a planning tool. Second, like most of the aid industry, SCN has gradually moved away from self-implementation of programs, towards working through local partners (Kruse *et al.* 2009). Third, SCN is in tune with the dominant discourse on aid effectiveness. To document added value and results, SCN follows complex routines of planning, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation. The very organizational context that influences staff perceptions of risks for SCN is itself a construction, often shaped by forces outside the organization.

Why would SCN seek to conform to ideas and practices concerning development and NGOs that are widespread in the aid industry? New institutional theorists see the pursuit of legitimacy as the primary rationale for isomorphism (Scott 1995). “Legitimacy” in this context can be described as a social evaluation process by which organizations gain the support and social approval of other organizations in their field (Deephouse and Suchman 2008). Scott (1995) distinguishes three dimensions of legitimacy: normative, based on moral obligations; cognitive, based on mental models, conventions, and rational myths; and regulatory, based on formal and informal rules and norms. To gain endorsement from relevant stakeholders in their fields (Deephouse 1996), organizations seek to conform to the dominant system of values, mental models, conventions, rules, and norms (Meyer and Rowan 1977): they do their utmost to follow the “rules of the game.”

According to Hilhorst (2007:297), “much of what NGO actors do is inspired by everyday politics of organizational legitimation.” Legitimacy is a key driving force of organizational behavior because it enables NGOs to compete for scarce donor funds (Atack 1999, Nee 2003, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008). NGOs have a greater need for legitimacy precisely because, in order to carry out their activities, they depend on the active and long-term engagement of external stakeholders (DiMaggio 1988 cited in Suchman 1995). This is also the case with SCN, which relies on grants and donations as its primary source



of income. Although SCN's employees did not use the word "legitimacy," several respondents spoke of the organization's *reputation* as a value at stake. In fact, some respondents explicitly acknowledged that SCN's survival depends upon it being perceived as a credible and trustworthy organization by donors, beneficiaries, and the general public. As a respondent from head office summed up: "Reputation is what we live on, for people to give money" (#6-F-NOR). Several authors have suggested that the concepts of reputation and legitimacy are closely related (Deephouse and Carter 2005). Both concepts refer to stakeholders' perceptions about an organization (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990, Fombrun and Shanley 1990) that, if positive, can improve its access to external resources (Hall 1992, Suchman 1995). If, then, we understand legitimacy and reputation as similar concepts, when my respondents constructed reputation as an object at risk, they were in fact acknowledging the importance of legitimacy for an organization like SCN.

If the pursuit of legitimacy is a driving force of organizational behavior and structure (Scott 1995), does it affect perceptions of organizational risk? And if so, how do institutional pressures to conform to legitimating rules, conventions, rational myths, and paradigms widespread in the international aid system affect perceptions of organization risk among SCN staff? To these questions we now turn.

## 6.2 Institutional determinants of risk perception

Data collected at SCN indicate that institutional pressures to conform to the aid industry, driven by legitimacy considerations, play a role in shaping staff perceptions of organizational risk. This occurs in two ways. Firstly, expectations and rationalized myths (Meyer and Rowan 1977) about development and NGOs that are dominant in the aid industry set the criteria for legitimate organizational behavior, which influences perceptions of what is

---

important for SCN's success and survival as an organization. Since there can be no risk unless "something of human value (including humans themselves) has been put at stake" (Rosa 1998:28), these conceptions of value serve as a background against which relationships of risk are constructed (Corvellec 2010, Boholm and Corvellec 2011). Secondly, SCN faces conflicting legitimating criteria (Suchman 1995, Scott 1995) and multiple legitimating audiences<sup>24</sup> (Lister 2003). The inherent tensions between different types and sources of legitimacy give rise to perceptions of organizational risks, as actions to meet one legitimacy criterion may jeopardize another (Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008).

### **6.2.1 Legitimacy, value and objects at risk**

As mentioned in the Chapter 2, researchers have identified five key criteria for NGO legitimacy which reflect socially constructed ideas about development and NGO organizational behavior (Meyer and Rowan 1977). These are: (1) the moral character of an NGO's mission, including level of correlation between professed values and practices (Saxby 1996, Edwards 1999, Attack 1999, Edwards and Zadek 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008); (2) legal compliance (Edwards 1999, Edwards and Zadek 2003, Lister 2003, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008); (3) accountability and good governance (Edwards and Hulme 1995, Saxby 1996, Attack 1999, Lister 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008); (4) performance, efficiency, and technical expertise (Saxby 1996, Eade 1997, Fowler 1997, Pearce 1997, Attack 1999, Brown 2001, Edwards and Zadek 2003, Lister 2003, Vidal *et al.* 2006, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008); and (5) experience in the South and partnership with Southern NGOs (Lister 2001, Lister 2003, Brehm 2001 cited in Rauh 2010).

---

<sup>24</sup> Donors, host governments, general public, beneficiaries, etc.

---

Compliance with criteria upon which SCN's legitimacy rests influences employee understandings of what is valuable for the organization and should be protected. That helps explain, although not exclusively, the construction of certain objects as a value at stake. As I seek to show, the risk-construction of funds, children, and the results of programs and projects implemented by SCN was directly related to sources of NGO legitimacy reported in the literature.

The construction of *children* as an object of risk can be linked to the moral character of SCN's mission, which is a powerful source of legitimacy to the organization. Who would not agree that working for children's rights is both desirable and necessary? Therefore, being perceived as an organization that acts in the best interests of children endows SCN with an aura of "moral authority" for saying what it says and doing what it does (Edwards 1995 cited in Kuroda and Imata 2003:1–2). Moreover, it allows SCN to secure resources that are essential for its survival (Atack 1999, Nee 2003, Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008).

However, the moral character of SCN's mission requires the organization to live up to its self-proclaimed values and standards. If, directly or indirectly, the organization exposes children to harm, that would cast doubt upon SCN's moral authority. As a respondent from head office observed: "You went to SCN's event and you drowned. How's that for saving children's lives? So, it's on our name" (#6-F-NOR). A case of abuse could jeopardize SCN's entire support system. Who would donate funds or listen to an organization that violates its own, morally charged, mandate? Although respondents stressed the intrinsic importance of children in their examples of risk—after all, they do believe that children are worth protecting—they were also concerned about the effect that a case of child abuse or exploitation would have on SCN's reputation. As another respondent from Oslo argued:

If we expose children to risks ourselves, just imagine what would be the consequences for the individual child, the consequences for SC as a

---

credible organization. I think that the risk on our own conduct is very high. If we experience cases of abuse or anything it would be just devastating to the child and to the organization. (#3-M-NOR)

“Children” becomes the background against which risk relationships are constructed because SCN achieves normative legitimacy precisely by “saving the children.”

The construction of *results* as an object at risk stems from institutional pressures for performance and efficiency. The idea that development is all about results has now become a “dominant cognitive model” (Scott 1994 cited in Lister 2003) in the aid industry, as a response to charge that aid does not work (Leroy 2012). And this means not just any result, but measurable and quantitative outcomes, preferably obtained in the short or middle term. In order to achieve cognitive legitimacy, SCN must operate under the same frame of reference as its donors and other NGOs (Scott 2001). This requires not only embracing the results rhetoric and adopting a results-based management approach, but also delivering on results promised to donors in exchange for funding. As some respondents noted, SCN’s main donor, Norad, is particularly insistent about documentation of results achieved.

Demonstrating performance is also a way of gaining normative legitimacy, as it shows that the organization is competent and truly committed to its mission. In order to justify its existence, SCN must show how its programs and projects contribute to improve children’s lives. As a respondent from Bosnia-Herzegovina noted: “We are here as an organization to add value to the chain, to the processes. So, that we can justify why we are here and we can improve the situation for children” (#4-F-SEE). Thus, SCN states in its Strategy 2010–2013 (2009:8): “We will strengthen our [brand and] position [in Norway] by communicating the results we achieve for children rather than only describing their needs. We want to demonstrate that development cooperation works.”

That means that if programs implemented by SCN suffer adverse effects (delays, interruptions, reduction in scope, etc.), the organization can be seen as

failing to meet expectations of donors and the general public, and damage will be done to its credibility as development actor. Hence, the construction of results as an object at risk.

The construction of *funds* as a value at stake also relates to sources of NGO legitimacy identified in the literature: the moral character of SCN's mission; and accountability and good governance. As a claim-label (Hilhorst 2003:7), the term "NGO" implies that the organization's actions are motivated by the common good rather than private interests. As a result, NGOs are expected to be good stewards of the financial resources entrusted by donors, and be accountable for how these resources are spent. If funds are lost due to corruption or fraud, especially involving employees, SCN's "moral aura" would be tarnished. Who would donate money to an organization that has been involved in a serious corruption scandal? As one respondent from head office observed:

If you get a very bad case of child abuse or corruption (...), for example, you lose trust from donors, the public and children. (...) A NGO with a mission like ours can only survive if we have the trust of the people that want to support us, and of the children we want to support. (...) Donors won't give us money if they don't trust us to do a good job or if something goes wrong. (#10-F-NOR)

Ideas about appropriated standards of NGO accountability and good governance gain legal mandate when they are enforced through coercion. An example is the zero-tolerance policy on corruption in development cooperation adopted by the Norwegian government. Serving as a risk management strategy for Norad and the MFA, the policy requires grant recipients to repay funds in case of financial irregularities. Therefore, protecting funds allows SCN to preserve its reputation and also avoid losses. As a respondent summed up: "It is costly for us to not follow the zero-tolerance policy" (#22-M-NO).

As seen through the lenses of the relational theory of risk, there is nothing inherently valuable about children, results or funds. They have been

---

*constructed* as such—and are consequently subject to debate and reinterpretation (Corvellec 2010, Boholm and Corvellec 2011). The question is: “who does the constructing?” (Clarke and Short 1993:380). Here I hold that institutional pressures within the aid industry can affect perceptions of organizational risk, by shaping what respondents perceive as valuable to obtain and maintain SCN’s legitimacy as a development actor. These conceptions of value serve as reference point against which respondents establish relationships of risk. When risks do strike, SCN may fail to meet expectations and conventions about NGOs and development, upon which their reputation and credibility rest.

As Scott (1995) reminds us, legitimacy is socially constructed. In other words, the “sources” of NGO legitimacy reflect shared understandings about how NGOs should operate, and about how to “do” development—understandings that have, over time, become accepted in the aid industry as appropriate courses of action. Other criteria for NGO legitimacy would have given rise to other risks, because that would imply a different way of evaluating what it is important for the organization’s survival and success (after Corvellec 2010). A social-constructionist view of risk and organizations “encourages counterfactual thinking; that is, paying attention to what could have happened, but did not” (Clarke and Short 1993:382).

It should be noted, however, that in my study of SCN I did not find a strong connection between the construction of staff as an object at risk and sources of NGO legitimacy identified in the literature. I return to this point in section 6.3, in connection with the limitations involved in linking risk perception to the pursuit of legitimacy.

### Legitimacy and risk objects?

If institutional pressures for conformity driven by legitimacy considerations play a role in the construction of certain objects as “at risk,” what accounts for

the construction of other objects as being risky? That is a relevant question if risk is understood as a relationship. In this respect, however, the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011) does not provide an answer. Following Rescher (1983) and Rosa (1998), the theory posits that when people say that there is a risk that A could affect B, they do so because B is considered valuable. Nevertheless, if risk objects are not inherently dangerous, we need to know what it is about A that makes people perceive it as a potential source of harm. Here I will draw on the psychometric paradigm to suggest that at least the construction of partners as a risk object can also be understood in the context of the pursuit of legitimacy. Data collected at SCN indicate that local partners are perceived as risky because, although SCN obtains legitimacy by working with them, the organization does not have control over their actions.

During the early stages of data analysis, it struck me that several respondents portrayed partners as a source of potential danger, even though collaboration with NGOs and host governments in the South is a key working principle for SCN. In fact, the entire aid industry today is convinced that partnership and developing local capacity are essential to bring about development, although self-implementation was the standard procedure for most Northern NGOs until the 1980s, including SCN. As a “dominant cognitive model” (Scott 1994 cited in Lister 2003), the partnership discourse manifests itself in regulatory constraints. For instance, most donors today would not finance projects proposed by Northern NGOs that are not implemented through local partners in the South. In addition, some developing countries have adopted laws that prohibit INGOs from implementing projects directly. Consequently, working through Southern partners allows a Northern-based NGO like SCN to obtain and maintain both cognitive and regulatory legitimacy (Brehm 2001 cited in Rauh 2010, Lister 2001, Lister 2003). Yet, several of my respondents said that partnership with local NGOs or the host government can be risky, especially as regards funds and the results of projects and programs.

According to Boholm and Corvellec (2011:180), “[r]isk management and governance strive to keep the risk object out and the object at risk in by developing an adequate risk management regime.” However, the opposite happens at SCN. The organization must keep the risk object *in*, since partnership with Southern NGOs and governmental agencies is a source of its own legitimacy. My data indicate that the construction of partners as a risk object seems to derive from a perceived loss of managerial control. During the interviews, some respondents spoke of control when describing partners as a risk object. For instance, a respondent from Uganda argued:

A risk... I would say...it is the partnership mode. It's very nice but it also has its challenges. I would say that 90 percent of what we do is through partners, and yet we don't really have that much control over what the partners do. (#18-M-UG)

Several studies on public risk perception using the psychometric approach have shown that perceptions of control (or lack thereof) influence how people form judgments about risk. Researchers have found that people tend to consider hazardous activities or technologies riskier when they feel they do not have control over them (Fischhoff *et al.* 1978, Rachman 1990 cited in Oltedal *et al.* 2004).

In addition, de Graaf (1987 cited in Lewis 2001:141-142) suggests that the environment in which NGOs operate consists of some factors/processes that fall within their control, and others over which these organization have limited or no influence (see Figure 16). Note that governmental agencies and other NGOs occupy the second concentric circle of Graf's framework: this circle includes elements of an NGO environment that can be influenced through persuasion, lobbying, patronage, co-option and collaboration, but not controlled.

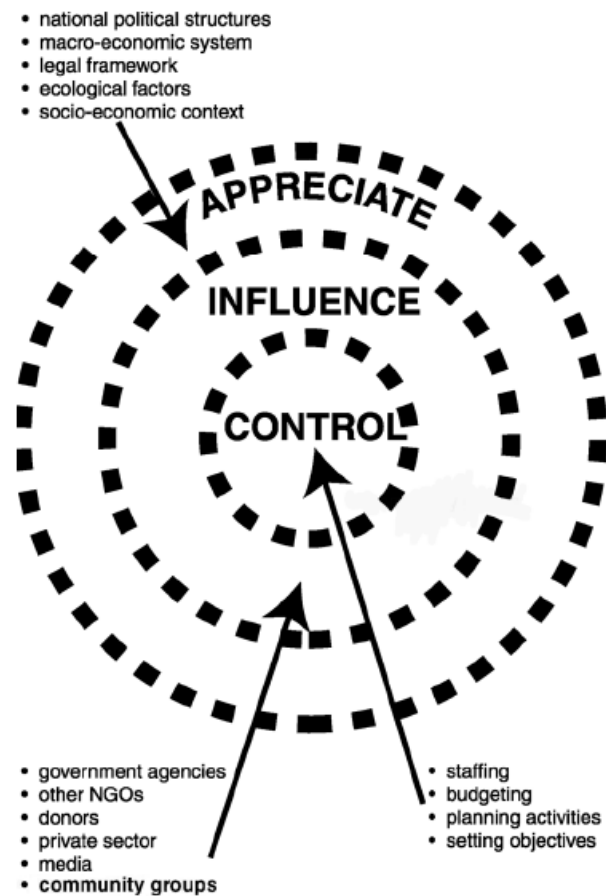
Under the partnership mode, SCN “outsources” to its partners the implementation of programs and the disbursement of funds, but retains liability



in case something goes wrong.

For instance, in case of corruption involving partners, SCN will have to repay the grant money to the Norwegian government. Moreover, if partners fail to deliver expected results, so does SCN. As noted earlier, results and funds are perceived as valuable because they are directly linked to accountability and performance, which are important sources of NGO legitimacy: hence the emphasis on mechanisms to assess the potential risks that partners can bring to SCN.

Figure 16: Span of an NGO's control



Source: de Graaf 1987 cited in (Lewis 2001:141-142).

I did not find enough support on my data to claim that the construction of other objects as risky, like staff, the host country and the host government, was also related to sources of NGO legitimacy. I return to this point in section 6.3.

### 6.2.2 The dilemmas of NGO legitimacy

The Oxford dictionary (2012) defines “dilemma” as a situation in which a choice must be made between two equally unfavorable options. During the interviews, some respondents spoke of dilemmas faced by SCN when describing risks for the organization. These dilemmas reflect conflicting expectations about NGO behavior to which SCN must conform in order to be

perceived as a legitimate actor in the aid industry. As I will seek to demonstrate, the tensions between different types and “sources” of legitimacy and different stakeholder priorities over legitimacy sources (Suchman 1995, Scott 2001) play a role in shaping employees’ perceptions of organizational risk, since actions to secure one source of NGO legitimacy may put another at risk (Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008).

One of the dilemmas singled out by respondents concerns conflicting expectations as to professionalism and low administrative costs. Like other development NGOs, SCN is expected to act as a “channel,” transferring funds from donors in the North to beneficiaries in the South, with minimum expenditure for administration. On the other hand, SCN is also expected to behave as a professional organization with good management systems to ensure that funds are well spent and results achieved. This requires using part of the funds raised to run the organization itself (paying salaries, maintaining properties, fund-raising, paying software licenses, etc.). As a respondent from Nepal explained:

We may say that our overhead costs are getting too high. Ok, that is a risk, in the sense that a number of donors don’t want our overhead costs to be high. We don’t, we want get as much money we can to children. So, it’s a challenge that we have to deal with. We may get negative feedback from donors, and we may get negative publicity if we seem to have overheads that are too high. Having said that, to run good monitoring and evaluation, to design good projects, to provide good materials on communication, it requires money which is not directly given to children, but it’s used in a sense to operate the organization. So, how do you balance that? How much should be going to direct programs to children? How much should go to the organization? (#14-F-NE)

In one way or another, the organization will face risks, hence the dilemma. If SCN keeps administrative costs low at the expenses of improving controls and monitoring systems, the organization risks corruption or failing to deliver expected results. If SCN invests to improve its internal control mechanisms at the expense of keeping administrative costs low, the organization risks being

criticized for not channeling the majority of donations to beneficiaries. As noted earlier, failing to deliver program outcomes, corruption, and high overheads are all risks for SCN. The “rules of the game” in the aid industry can create risks for SCN, by forcing it to prioritize one source of NGO legitimacy over another.

SCN faces not only multiple legitimating criteria, but multiple stakeholders whose interests and views may conflict with each other (Lister 2003). Seeking legitimacy with one stakeholder group may jeopardize the organization’s reputation and credibility with another (Lim 2012). This conflict was noted by some respondents who reflected upon the dilemma between speaking out against violations of children’s rights in the host country and keeping silent about sensitive/politicized issues. As an organization that claims to fight for the promotion, protection, and fulfillment of children’s rights, SCN is expected—by beneficiaries, other NGOs and the general public in Norway—to act according to its mission. This entails speaking up for children whenever the occasion arises, as a respondent from head office noted:

(...) we do have a huge responsibility because Save the Children is a huge organization, which is also seen by other organizations as a big organization, one that should step up on behalf of children and be the voice of children (#6-F-NOR)

However, these are not the only relevant social actors for SCN. An important legitimating stakeholder is the host government, which has regulatory authority over the organization’s operations within that country. From the perspective of the host government, a “legitimate” NGO is one whose actions match its values and expectations (Deephouse 1996). In certain countries, this means that SCN is allowed to do service delivery, but prohibited from doing advocacy work. Working in these countries involves a difficult choice, as a respondent from head office explained: “You work there under this frame and you keep a low profile when it comes to political issues; or you choose to not work in the country and raise your voice.” (#15-F-NOR)

Here lies the dilemma. If SCN speaks out against the abuse of children's rights in these countries, the organization loses legitimacy with the government. This could put the safety of staff and the implementation of programs at risk.

However, if SCN remain quiet about violations, in order to help their target group on the ground, the organization risks being accused by other stakeholders of violating its mandate. As another respondent noted:

That's the dilemma. SC media and communication people will always be saying: "We can't be somewhere and not talk about it. We cannot be in the Horn of Africa and see that Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières and others are speaking broadly and boldly about violations against children and we are in the same place and we are not allowed to do so." (#6-F-NOR)

Regardless of which stakeholder SCN chooses to prioritize, the organization will encounter risks. In fact, an advocacy manual produced by representatives from six SC national organizations (including SCN) states:

(...) sometimes it is necessary to take a strong stand on an issue and this may involve some risk. It is always hard to decide whether it is more important to speak out strongly and risk being jailed or kicked out of the country, or to stay silent and risk losing legitimacy by not standing up for your members and constituents. (International Save the Children Alliance 2007:60)

## 6.3 Limitations

There is no simple explanation for how people form judgments about risk. On the contrary, researchers have identified a wide range of factors that influence risk perception. These include heuristics and probability judgment biases; characteristics of the risk; religious and quasi-religious beliefs; trust; feelings; personality traits; cultural dispositions and worldviews; personal experience; socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender and race; mass media coverage; and information retrieval (Urban and Ščasný 2007). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge three main limitations of arguing that institutional

---

pressures influence employees' perceptions of organizational risk: it lacks organizational agency; it does not apply to all objects at risk and risk objects singled out by SCN employees; it rests upon a social-constructionist view of risk and organizations.

Critics have argued that the new institutionalism downplays organizational resistance, agency, and self-interest (DiMaggio 1988, Oliver 1991, Fligstein 2001). Consequently, the idea that institutional pressures influence perceptions of organizational risk can be accused of portraying organizations as passive recipients of external influences. A clarification is required here. Although I suggest that perceptions of organizational risk among SCN's employees are influenced by isomorphic pressures in the aid industry, that does not mean that SCN itself lacks the capacity to act and influence outcomes. Quite the opposite: "[k]nowledge about risk serves action" (Boholm and Corvellec 2011:181). Individuals and organizations decide how to respond to the risks they perceive. For instance, SCN has been working to improve its financial systems to reduce the risk of fraud and corruption. At the same time, the organization and other Norwegian NGOs have been lobbying the Norwegian government to change the zero-tolerance policy. Thus, SCN has been actively resisting a policy that leaves all financial risks in doing development work to the grant recipient.

Another shortcoming of this study is that I was not able to demonstrate that all objects singled out by respondents were related to sources of NGO legitimacy. I myself saw the construction of staff as an object at risk as being related to the moral character of SCN's mission and legal compliance to employment regulations, but there was not enough support in my data for making such claim. In fact, none of my respondents described a risk for staff as a risk for SCN's reputation. I encountered a similar problem with the risk objects. It could be argued that the host country and the host government were perceived as risky because SCN has no control over them (de Graaf 1987 cited in Lewis

---

2001:141–142), even though the organization gains legitimacy by operating in and having links with the South (Lister 2001, Lister 2003, Brehm 2001 cited in Rauh 2010). However, I found little evidence in the data to support that claim. As explained in Chapter 4, I did not develop my interview questions on the basis of the relational theory of risk, and so I did not probe respondents on, for instance, why it was important to protect staff, or why the host country was dangerous.

The third limitation of linking institutional pressures to risk perception is that it is based on a social constructionist view of risk and organizations. As noted in Chapter 2, there is ongoing debate about the ontological status of risk (Renn 1998, Breakwell 2007, Aven 2011). Briefly put: is risk something “out there,” or is it something that “lies in the eye of the beholder”? Space constraints prevent me from delving more deeply into this debate. It should be noted, however, that a different ontological and epistemological view of risk would have implied an entire different approach to tackling the research questions of this study. For instance, the view of risk as a product of individual intra-psychic processes would have required psychological rating scales and statistical methods for studying perceptions of organizational risk among SCN staff.

Finally, it must be stressed that institutional pressures are not the only determinants of organizational risk perception. Situational factors like working location, hierarchy level, and functional-area membership do play a role in shaping employees’ perceptions of risk for themselves and their organization (Marek *et al.* 1985, Rayner 1986, Hutter 2001, Mohammed 2007, 2010).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis set out to investigate how NGO workers form judgments about organizational risks, on the basis of a case study of Save the Children Norway (SCN), an international children's rights organization that provides both humanitarian and development aid. In contrast to a previous study on risk perception in NGOs that focused on employees' position within the organization (Mohammed 2007, 2010), this thesis adopted SCN itself as primary unit of analysis. The intention was to examine the influence of organization–environment relations on employees' perceptions of organizational risk.

I begin this concluding chapter by summarizing the main findings of this thesis. Next, I discuss some implications for the relational theory of risk (Boholm and Corvellec 2011). Finally, I suggest some directions for further research.

### 7.1 The thesis in a nutshell

Armed with the relational theory of risk, I decomposed the risk issues identified by SCN's employees into their component parts (Chapter 5). This revealed that the building blocks in many risk issues were surprisingly similar. All respondents constructed relationship of risk involving four risk objects (staff, the host country, the host government, and partners) and five objects at risk (results of projects and programs, children, funds, reputation, and staff)—regardless of their working location, area of function or hierarchical level. In addition, I showed that the identity of these objects as “dangerous” or “valuable” was not fixed: even valuable objects such as staff and funds could under certain circumstances be conceived as a potential source of harm.

---

From these findings, I argued that current explanations for organizational risk perception that focus on managerial practice (Corvellec 2010), and employees' position within the organization (Mohammed 2007, 2010) lack explanatory power when risk issues are deconstructed. Both those approaches also have important shortcomings. Corvellec's practice-immanent view of risk (2010) does not address what shapes managerial practice, and to some extent takes risk objects for granted. Mohammed (2007, 2010) treats organizational settings as self-evident and unproblematic, failing to problematize the context in which perceptions of risk are investigated.

In addition, both explanations lose sight of the fact that "no organization is an island unto itself" (Smith 1999:241). An organization such as SCN depends on external stakeholders in various ways: it relies on public and private donors to obtain financial resources; it needs the approval of the host government in developing countries to operate within their borders; it depends on partners to implement projects and programs on the ground; and so on. *All* organizations are embedded in larger societal systems which affect their structure and behavior (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Much of what organizations do is driven by the pursuit of external endorsement, which allows them to gain access to essential resources (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Suchman 1995, Deephouse and Suchman 2008).

Drawing on new institutional theory, I have suggested that to understand respondents' perceptions of organizational risk, we need to put risk issues into the context of SCN's operating environment: the aid industry. The pursuit of legitimacy should be recognized not only as a driving force of organizational structure and behavior, but also as playing a role in shaping understandings of organizational risk. To support this argument, I showed that the construction of certain objects as dangerous and others as valuable was related to sources of NGO legitimacy. In SCN, children, funds, and results were constructed as valuable—and consequently potentially at risk (Corvellec 2010, Boholm and



Corvellec 2011) — because they are necessary for SCN to meet prevailing expectations and institutionalized myths about NGOs and development in the aid industry. For instance, by safeguarding children from any harm related to the conduct of employees or the organization's operations, SCN preserves its image as an organization that acts in the best interests of children.

Additionally, the construction of SCN's reputation itself as an object at risk demonstrates the importance of external endorsement for the organization's survival and success. I also showed that legitimacy considerations, coupled with perceptions of lack of managerial control, may account for the construction of some objects as risky. For example, to conform to the dominant idea that aid can work only when Southern partners are involved and local capacity is developed, SCN must allow its partners control over funds and project results, both essential to SCN's reputation: hence the construction of partners as a potential source of danger.

Seeking legitimation as an development and humanitarian NGO is no easy task (Hilhorst 2007). SCN faces not only conflicting legitimacy criteria, but multiple legitimating audiences, whose views and priorities may clash. Actions to meet one legitimacy criterion may jeopardize another criterion (Ossewaarde *et al.* 2008). If SCN gives preference to one stakeholder, that may damage the organization's relationship with another. Trapped in dilemmas, the organization sees risk everywhere. For instance, should SCN improve its management system thereby risking high overheads? Or should it prioritize keeping administrative costs low, and thereby risk losing funds due to corruption? In one way or another, the organization risks failing to meet important criteria upon which its legitimacy rests. Unable to change the rules of the game, SCN resorts to risk management as a way out of the "double bind". As a respondent summed up: "Controlling the risks, if you like, it's constant" (#15-F-NOR).

That said, institutional pressures driven by legitimacy considerations are not the sole determinant of perceptions of organizational risk. Studies of occupational health and safety have produced ample evidence that where one sits within the organization determines what one sees as a risk (see Hutter 2001, Rayner 1986, Marek *et al.* 1985). The main contribution of the present study is to show the importance of taking into consideration an organization's external environment when investigating why employees perceive organizational risks as they do.

## 7.2 Comments on the relational theory of risk

Working with a relatively unknown theory may seem a risky move for an academic thesis. Yet, I believe this can enable novice researchers to engage in theory building. Here I briefly outline some reflections on Boholm and Corvellec's (2011) relational theory of risk.

Although researchers increasingly acknowledge the role of context, social practices, cultural representations in risk perception, "there is little understanding of how these social factors interact with the range of risk characteristics<sup>25</sup> identified by the psychometric tradition" (Williamson and Weyman 2005:iv). I believe the relational theory of risk can provide a way of connecting psychological and socio-cultural approaches to risk.

There is something very appealing about the psychometric paradigm (Fischhoff *et al.* 1978), despite all the criticisms.<sup>26</sup> It seems reasonable to argue that people find activities and technologies less risky when they are in charge of them, or when the negative effects take a long time to become visible. In fact, as I showed in Chapter 6 the construction of partners as a risk objects relates to

---

<sup>25</sup> Controllable or incontrollable; voluntary or involuntary; effect delayed or immediate; etc.

<sup>26</sup> See Sjöberg *et al.* (2004) for a complete review.

a perception of lack of managerial control. The real question is not whether psychologists are wrong or right, but what exactly it is that psychometric studies measure. Drawing on the relational theory of risk, I hold that the risk characteristics described by psychologists should be seen not as objective properties of risk, but as attributes that the observer chooses to highlight when constructing an object as risky.

For example, the asymmetry in partnership relations between Northern and Southern NGOs is often emphasized in the literature on NGOs and development studies (see Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen 2003, Oaxaca 2006). This imbalance stems from the fact that Northern NGOs often assume a donor role in the aid chain, channeling funds raised in the North to a few selected NGOs in the South. Although “he who pays the piper calls the tune,” some of my respondents felt that they could not control SCN’s local partners, especially as regards project implementation. Southern NGOs do find ways of exercising their agency in relations with their Northern counterparts and funding agencies (Wallace *et al.* 2006, Rauh 2010). For instance, Wallace *et al.* (2006) report that Southern NGOs put aside paper-based plans and indicators in their daily work, but revert to these tools when reporting to donors. Therefore, being controllable or uncontrollable is not an objective characteristic of partners, but an aspect that may be highlighted or downplayed. And what is control, if not a perception?

Emphasizing the role of value in a relationship of risk, the relational theory of risk places considerable emphasis on the object at risk, but to some extent neglects the risk object. The psychometric paradigm does precisely the opposite: focusing on the risk object, it seeks to discover the characteristics attributed to an activity and technology that account for its perceived riskiness. Combining *both* approaches should serve to advance our understanding of how relationships of risk are constructed.

### 7.3 Recommendations for further studies

The main contribution of this admittedly exploratory study is to identify foci, models, theories, or instruments that could be used in subsequent studies (Yin 2003a,b). In this section I propose some future research directions, in terms of methods and research questions.

To begin with, further work needs to be done to test the basic hypothesis that institutional pressures driven by the pursuit of organizational legitimacy play a role in shaping employees' perceptions of organizational risk. Drawing on the experience of this study, I recommend researchers to pay special attention to issue of research access, as it can restrict the choice of sampling strategy. Moreover, serious consideration should be given to the problem of "risk framing" (Henwood *et al.* 2008) when developing interview questions or survey questionnaires.

Research on risk perception could benefit from a more interdisciplinary approach. For instance, it could be a good idea to combine the psychometric paradigm and the relational theory of risk in another case study investigating perceptions of organizational risk. This would allow researchers to compare quantitative data from questionnaires and psychological scales with interview-based qualitative data obtained from the same research setting. Conversely, it would be interesting to adopt the individual employee and the organization as units of analysis. In this way, researchers could examine how situational factors (e.g. immediate working context, functional area, hierarchical level) and institutional pressures driven by legitimacy concerns interact in shaping employees' perceptions of risk.

These are some of the possible avenues for future research, since as Aven and Renn (2010:v) remind us, "[t]here are more questions than answers when people talk about risks."

## APPENDICES

### A. Interview guide

#### OPENING THE INTERVIEW:

- Thank employee for participating in the study.
- Brief explanation: objective of the research project, duration of interview, confidentiality, rights to withdraw and refuse answering questions, and permission for recording the interview.
- Opportunity for participant to ask questions.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Respondent (number/ID):
2. Gender:
3. Educational/professional background:
4. Area/position in SCN:
5. Working for SCN since when:

#### DEFINITION OF RISK:

1. What do you understand by the term “risk”?
2. What is “risk management” to you? Do you believe that risk can be managed? Are there limits to managing risks?
3. In your opinion, what is the importance of managing risks in an

---

organization like SCN?
<b>RISK PERCEPTION:</b>  1. What would you describe as the main risks for SCN as an organization? Could you provide examples?  2. What do you consider the key areas in which SCN is exposed to risk? Could you provide examples?
<b>MANAGING RISK:</b>  1. Can you describe how do you handle these risks? Can you provide an example?
<b>ATTITUDES TOWARDS RISK:</b>  1. In your opinion, are there any conditions or situations in which NGOs should: Take risks? Avoid taking risks? What are the critical determinants in each case?  2. Observing other staff members who are your superiors, peers or subordinates, which attitude towards risk do you feel is more common in SCN's management: taking risks, or avoiding them?
<b>CONCLUDING THE INTERVIEW:</b>  1. Do you feel that all the topics concerning this study that are important for you have been discussed?  2. Are there any other comments you would like to make concerning the study?

## B. Non-disclosure agreements

### **Non-disclosure agreement for students doing research in Save the Children - Norway**

#### **Background**


1. Save the Children Norway has agreed to provide various protocols-, strategy-, policy- and procedure documents in order for students to do research in Save the Children Norway as part of their studies at the University of Oslo.
2. The documents are made accessible provided that they are kept, handled and used in such a way that confidentiality is safeguarded.

#### **Non disclosure agreement between Save the Children Norway and Gilbia Santos Portela**

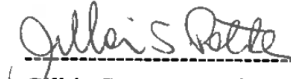
3. I, Gilbia Santos Portela, acknowledge that the information received or generated, directly or indirectly, while doing research in Save the Children Norway (SCN) as student at the university of Oslo is confidential, and that the nature of the business of the organization is such that the following conditions are reasonable, and therefore:
4. I warrant, covenant and agree as follows:  
I agree not to disclose, directly or indirectly, any information with respect to any business conducted by the organization. Without restricting the generality of the foregoing, it is agreed that I will not disclose:
  - Financial information, business plans, strategies for development or growth, or any other proprietary information not known generally to the public or in the public domain relating in any way to the business of the organization, or any other information regarding the management or method of operation of the organization, and
  - That I will not copy or reproduce, in any form, information provided to me by the organization for the purpose of distribution or use outside the scope of the university studies, and that all documentation provided will be returned to the organization or shredded unless otherwise approved, in writing, by the SCN Chief Executive Officer.
5. Restricted access  
The University of Oslo allows students to restricted access to their Master's Degree theses. Such restricted access entails no outside access to or lending of the thesis. By signing this agreement I accept to keep all documents and electronical files restricted, including my Master's degree theses.

6. I acknowledge that the aforesaid restrictions are necessary and fundamental to the organization, and are reasonable given the nature of the business carried on by the organization. I enter into this agreement totally voluntarily, with full knowledge of its meaning, and without duress.

Dated at the City of Oslo, this 06 day of OCTOBER, 2011.



Anne Kollenborg  
HR-Director  
Save the Children Norway



Gilbia Santos Portela  
Student  
University of Oslo





Gilbia Portela  
Culture, Environment and Sustainability  
University of Oslo  
SUM - Centre for Development and the Environment

3 October 2011

Dear Gilbia,

### **Confidentiality Obligations**

We have agreed that we will supply, or procure the supply of certain information to you concerning our organisation, Save the Children International, (the "**Charity**") so that you can carry out research for your master thesis on the risk management systems and processes in place at Save the Children Norway (the "**Purpose**").

In consideration of certain information relating to the Purpose being made available, or procuring that such information is made available, by signing and returning the attached copy of this letter you hereby unconditionally and irrevocably undertake as follows:

1. All business, financial, operational, personal data (as defined in the Data Protection Act 1998) or other information or data whatsoever (including without limitation trade secrets, know-how and client contact details) and in whatever form stored or maintained, whether in oral, written, magnetic, digital or any other form relating to the Purpose supplied to you, your agents, directors, employees or advisers (the "**Confidential Information**") will be held by you and them in complete and strict confidence and you will not without our prior written consent disclose or permit the disclosure of any part of the Confidential Information to any other person, firm or company.
2. The Confidential Information will not be used for any purpose other than for the Purpose.
3. In particular, you will take all necessary steps to protect any personal data supplied to you in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant data protection legislation.
4. This undertaking does not apply to Confidential Information which (i) you are required to disclose to any court of competent jurisdiction acting in pursuance of its powers, but then only to the extent so required. (ii) is or becomes public knowledge otherwise than through default by your employees, agents or advisers,

(iii) which is already lawfully in your possession prior to its disclosure, or (iv) hereafter becomes lawfully available to you other than from us.

5. On receipt of a request from us to do so, you will return to us all documents, notes and other data in whatever form the same may be stored which constitute, include or incorporate in any way any Confidential Information and any and all copies made of such documents or material, in whatever form such copies may have been made.
6. You will indemnify and hold harmless ourselves from and against any action, claim or proceeding and all costs, expenses and other liabilities arising therefrom brought by any person as a result of the unauthorised disclosure of any of the Confidential Information or any other breach of the terms of this letter.
7. You will ensure that each person to whom any disclosure of Confidential Information is made (including, but not limited to, your agents, directors, employees and advisers) adheres to the terms of this undertaking as if he, she or it were a party to it.

This letter when countersigned by you constitutes a legally binding agreement which shall be governed by and construed in accordance with English law and you hereby irrevocably submit to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

In order to record your agreement with and to be bound by this letter will you please sign and return the attached copy.

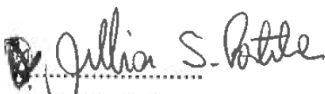
Yours sincerely,



For and on behalf of

Save the Children International

I agree to the confidentiality obligations set out in the attached letter.

  
.....  
Giulia Portela  
Dated 10.10.2011

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Agar, M. H. (1980): *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Aldrich, H. E., and Fiol, C. M. (1994): "Fools Rush in? The Institutional Context of Industry Creation." *The Academy of Management Review* [online] 19 (4): 645–670, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/258740> [cited 10 March 2012]
- Apthorpe, R. (2011): "Coda: With Alice in Aidland: A Seriously Satirical Allegory" in D. Mosse (ed.): *Adventures in Aidland: the Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*. New York, NY: Berghahn.
- Ashforth, B. E., and Gibbs, B. W. (1990): "The Double-edge of Organizational Legitimation." *Organization Science* 1(2):177–194.
- Atack, I. (1999): "Four Criteria of Development NGO Legitimacy." *World Development* [online] 27 (5): 855–864, URL: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X99000339> [cited 03 March 2012]
- Aven, T. (2011): "On How to Conceptualise and Describe Risk." *RT&A* 2 (20):28–37.
- Aven, T., and Renn, O. (2009): "On Risk Defined as an Event Where the Outcome is Uncertain." *Journal of Risk Research* 12 (1):1–11.
- Aven, T., and Renn, O. (2010): *Management and Governance: Concepts, Guidelines and Applications*. Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.
- Bauman, Z. (2005): *Liquid Life*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Berg, B. L. (2001): *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann (1966): *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Bernstein, P. L. (1996): *Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bertrand, N., and Brown, L. (2006): *Risk Management: a Guide for Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations*. Toronto: Imagine Canada.
- Bickerstaff, K. (2004): "Risk Perception Research: Socio-Cultural Perspectives on the Public Experience of air Pollution." *Environment International* 30 (6):827–40.

- 
- Boghossian, P. (2001): "What is Social Construction?" *Times Literary Supplement*.  
[online] URL:  
<http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle:What+is+social+construction?#3> [cited 16 July 2012]
- Boholm, Å. (2003): "The Cultural Nature of Risk: Can There be an Anthropology of Uncertainty?" *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 68 (2):159–178.
- Boholm, Å. (2008): "The Cultural Construction of Risk: a Relational Approach." Paper presented at the First ISA Forum of Sociology, Sociological Research and Public Debate, Barcelona, 5 - 8 September.
- Boholm, Å., and Corvellec, H. (2011): "A Relational Theory of Risk." *Journal of Risk Research* 14 (2):175–190.
- Borgatti, S., and Molina, J. (2005): "Toward Ethical Guidelines for Network Research in Organizations." *Social Networks* [online] 27 (2005) 107–117, URL: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378873305000146> [cited 18 May 2011]
- Bornstein, L. (2003): "Management Standards and Development Practice in the South African Aid Chain." *Public Administration and Development* 23: 393–404.
- Bradbury, J. A. (1989): "The Policy Implications of Differing Concepts of Risk." *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 14 (4):380–399.
- Breakwell, G. M. (2007): *The Psychology of Risk*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Brehm, V. M. (2001): "Promoting Effective North-South NGO Partnerships: A Comparative Study of 10 European NGOs." INTRAC Occasional Papers Series Number 35. Oxford, UK: INTRAC.
- Brinkerhoff, D. W. (2005): "Organizational Legitimacy, Capacity and Capacity Development." Paper presented at 8th Research Conference of the Public Management Research Association, Los Angeles, September 29–October 1.
- Brown, L. D. (2001): "Civil Society Legitimacy: A Discussion Guide" in L.D. Brown (ed.): *Practice-Research Engagement and Civil Society in a Globalizing World*. Washington, DC: Civicus and the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations.
- Buchanan, D. A., and Bryman, A. (2007): "Contextualizing Methods Choice in Organizational Research." *Organizational Research Methods* 10 (3):483–501.
- Buchanan, D. A., Boddy, D., and Mc Calman, J. (1988): "Getting In, Getting On, Getting Out and Getting Back" in Bryman, A. (ed.): *Doing Research in Organisations*. London, UK: Routledge.

- 
- Bulmer, M. (1988): "Some Reflections upon Research in Organizations" in Bryman, A. (ed.): *Doing Research in Organisations*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Campion, P. M. (2002): *Space and Organizations: the Ecology of Rural NGOs in San Luis Potosi, Mexico*. D. Phil. Dissertation. Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Department of Sociology.
- Carter, R., Cant, J., and Lister, S. (2008): *Stocktake on Donor Approaches to Managing Risk when Using Country Systems*. London, UK: CIPFA/ Mokoro,
- Cater, J. K. (2011): "SKYPE: A Cost-effective Method for Qualitative Research." *Rehabilitation Counselors & Educators Journal* 4(2) 10-17.
- Chauvin, B., Hermand, D., and Mullet, E. (2007): "Risk Perception and Personality Facets." *Risk Analysis* 27(1): 171-185.
- Chess, C. (2001): "Organizational Theory and the Stages of Risk Communication." *Risk Analysis* [online] 21 (1):179–188, URL: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11332546> [cited 01 April 2012]
- Clarke, L., and Short, J. F. (1993): "Social Organization and Risk: Some Current Controversies." *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1): 375–399.
- Coleman, C.-L. (1993): "The Influence of Mass Media and Interpersonal Communication on Societal and Personal Risk Judgments." *Communication Research* 20 (4): 611–628.
- Corvellec, H. (2009): "The Practice of Risk Management: Silence is not Absence." *Risk Management* [online] 11 (3-4):285–304, URL:<http://www.palgrave-journals.com/doi/10.1057/rm.2009.12> [cited 10 May 2012]
- Corvellec, H. (2010): "Organizational Risk as it Derives from What Managers Value: A Practice-Based Approach to Risk Assessment." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 18 (3):145–154.
- Corvellec, H. (2011): "The narrative Structure of Risk Accounts." *Risk Management* [online] 13 (3):101–121, URL: <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/doi/10.1057/rm.2011.5> [cited 04 June 2011]
- Cox, S., and Flin, R. (1998): "Safety Culture: Philosopher's Stone or Man of Straw?" *Work & Stress* 12 (3):189–201.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007): *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crewe, E., and Harrison, E. (1999): *Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid*. London, UK: ZED Books.
- Cutter, S. L. (1993): *Living with Risk: The Geography of Technological Hazards*. London, UK: Edward Arnold.

- 
- Dafel, B. A., and Jackson, P. (2000): "In the Eye of the Beholder." *CA Magazine* [online], URL: <http://www.camagazine.com/archives/print-edition/2000/oct/regulars/camagazine26718.aspx>.
- de Graaf, M. (1987): "Context, Constraint or Control? Zimbabwean NGOs and their Environment." *Development Policy Review* 5(3): 277–301.
- Dean, M. (1999): "Risk, Calculable and Incalculable" in D. Lupton (ed.): *Risk and Sociocultural Theory: New Directions and Perspectives*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Deephouse, D. (1996): "Does Isomorphism Legitimate?" *The Academy of Management Journal* 39 (4):1024–1039.
- Deephouse, D., and Carter, S. (2005): "An Examination of Differences Between Organizational Legitimacy and Organizational Reputation." *Journal of Management Studies* 42 (2):329–360.
- Deephouse, D., and Suchman, M. (2008): "Legitimacy in Organizational Institutionalism" in R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, and R. Suddaby (eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Degnbol-Martinussen, J., and Engberg-Pedersen, P. (2003): *Aid: Understanding International Development Cooperation*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Denscombe, M. (2007): *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Social Research Projects* (3rd ed.). Berkshire, UK: McGraw-Hill Open University Press.
- DFID (2010): "Mitchell: Aid Agencies to Focus on Value for Money" [online].URL: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/mitchell-aid-agencies-to-focus-on-value-for-money/> [cited 01 February 2012]
- DiMaggio, P. J. (1988): "Interest and Agency in Institutional Theory" in L. Zucker (ed.): *Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- DiMaggio, P. J., and Powell, W. W. (1983): "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* [online] 48 (2):147–160, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095101> [cited 11 December 2011]
- DiMaggio, P. J., and Powell, W. W. (1991): *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Douglas, M. (1978): *Cultural Bias*. London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.
- Douglas, M. (1985): *Risk Acceptability According to Social Sciences*. London, UK: Routledge.

- 
- Douglas, M. (1992): *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Douglas, M., and Wildavsky, A. (1982): *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Eade, D. (1997): *Capacity Building: An Approach to People-centred Development*. Oxford, UK: Oxfam.
- Edwards, M. (1999): "Legitimacy and Values in NGOs and Voluntary Organizations: Some Skeptical Thoughts" in D. Lewis (ed.): *International Perspectives on Voluntary Action: Reshaping the Third Sector*. London, UK: Earthscan.
- Edwards, M., and Hulme D. (1995): "NGO Performance and Accountability: Introduction and Overview" in M. Edwards and D. Hulme (ed.): *Non-governmental Organisations: Performance and Accountability*. London, UK: Earthscan.
- Edwards, M., and Zadek, S. (2003): "Governing the Provision of Global Public Goods: The Role and Legitimacy of Nonstate Actors" in I. Kaul, R., Conceicao, K. Glouven and R. Mendoza (ed): *Providing Global Public Goods: Managing Globalization*. New York, NY: UN and Oxford University Press.
- Fischhoff, B., Slovic, P., Lichtenstein, S., Read, S., and Combs, B. (1978): "How Safe is Safe Enough? A Psychometric Study of Attitudes towards Technological Risks and Benefits." *Policy Sciences* [online] 9:127–152, URL: <http://sds.hss.cmu.edu/media/pdfs/fischhoff/HowSafeisSafeEnough.pdf> [cited 22 July 2012]
- Fligstein, N. (2001): "Social Skill and the Theory of Fields." *Sociological Theory* 19 (2):105–125.
- Flynn, J., Burns, W., Mertz, W., and Slovic, P. (1992): "Trust as a Determinant of Opposition to High-Level Radioactive Waste Repository: Analysis of a Structural Model." *Risk Analysis* 12(3):417-429.
- Flynn, J., Slovic, P., and Mertz, C. K. (1994): "Gender, Race, and Perception of Environmental Health Risks." *Risk Analysis* 14(6):1101-1108
- Fombrun, C., and Shanley, M. (1990): "What's in a Name? Reputation Building and Corporate Strategy." *Academy of Management Journal* 33(2): 233-258.
- Fowler, A. (1997): *Striking a Balance: A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-governmental Organisations in International Development*. London, UK: Earthscan.
- Freudenburg, W. R., Coleman, C.-L., Gonzales, J., and Helgeland C. (1996): "Media Coverage of Hazard Events: Analyzing the Assumptions." *Risk Analysis* 16(1):31–42

- 
- Galaskiewicz, J. (1985): "Interorganizational Relations." *Annual Review of Sociology* 11:281–304.
- Gherardi, S. (2009): "Introduction: The Critical Power of the Practice Lens." *Management Learning* [online] 40 (2):115–128, URL: <http://mlq.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1350507608101225> [cited 26 July 2011]
- Giddens, A. (1999): "Risk and Responsibility." *The Modern Law Review* [online] 62 (1):1–10, URL: [http://sociologos.insa-lyon.fr/files/rte/file/SOCIOLOGOS/RESSOURCES/DECISION/risque\\_Giddens\\_Risk-and-Responsibility.pdf](http://sociologos.insa-lyon.fr/files/rte/file/SOCIOLOGOS/RESSOURCES/DECISION/risque_Giddens_Risk-and-Responsibility.pdf) [cited 01 October 2011]
- Goddard, A., and Assad, M. J. (2006): "Accounting and Navigating Legitimacy in Tanzanian NGOs." *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 19 (3):377–404.
- Grace, M. F. (2010): "Nonprofits and the Value of Risk Management" in B. A. Seaman and D. R. Young (ed.): *Handbook of Research on Nonprofit Economics and Management*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Gravlien, I. (2012): *The Partnership Between DNV & the Red Cross*, URL: [http://www.dnv.com/binaries/Partnership\\_status\\_Report\\_2011\\_tcm4-514514.pdf](http://www.dnv.com/binaries/Partnership_status_Report_2011_tcm4-514514.pdf) [cited 20 October 2012]
- Gustafsd, P. E. (1998): "Gender Differences in Risk Perception: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives." *Risk Analysis* [online] 18 (6):805–811, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1539-6924.1998.tb01123.x> [cited 11 July 2012]
- Hakes, J.K., and Viscusi, W.K. (2004): "Dead Reckoning: Demographic Determinants of the Accuracy of Mortality Risk Perception." *Risk Analysis* 24(3): 651-663.
- Hall, R. (1992): "The Strategic Analysis of Intangible Resources." *Strategic Management Journal* 13(2):135–44.
- Hancock, D. R., and Algozzine, B. (2006): *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hansson, S. O. (2010): "Risk: Objective or Subjective, Facts or Values." *Journal of Risk Research* [online] 13 (2):231–238, URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13669870903126226> [cited 10 August 2011]
- Healey, M. J., and Rawlinson, M. B. (1993): "Interviewing Business Owners and Managers: A Review of Methods and Techniques." *Geoforum* [online] 24 (3):339–355, URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0016-7185\(93\)90026-E](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0016-7185(93)90026-E) [cited 10 August 2011]



- 
- Henwood, K.L., Pidgeon, N., Sarre, S., Simmons, P., and Smith, N. (2008): "Risk, Framing and Everyday Life: Methodological and Ethical Reflections from Three Sociocultural Projects." *Health, Risk and Society* [online] 10(5):421-438, URL: [http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/5009/2/Risk&Framing inc table\\_author version.pdf](http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/5009/2/Risk&Framing%20inc%20table%20author%20version.pdf) [cited 06 July 2011]
- Herman, M. L., Head, G. L., Jackson, P. M., and Fogarty, T. E. (2004): *Managing Risk in Nonprofit Organizations: A Comprehensive Guide* (1st ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hermann, M. G., Lecy, J. D., Mitchell, G. E., Page, C., Raggo, P., Schmitz, H. P., and Viñuela, L. (2010): *Transnational NGOs: A Cross-Sectoral Analysis of Leadership Perspectives*. Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs. [online]. URL: [http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/tngo/Abridged\\_white\\_paper\\_19\\_APR\\_2010.pdf](http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/tngo/Abridged_white_paper_19_APR_2010.pdf) [cited 11 September 2011]
- Hilgartner, S. (1992): "The Social Construction of Risk Objects: or, How to Pry Open Networks of Risk" in J. F. Short and L. Clarke (ed.): *Organizations, Uncertainties, and Risk*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Hilhorst, D. (2003): *The Real World of NGOs: Discourses, Diversity and Development*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Hilhorst, D. (2007): "The Art of NGO-ing: Everyday Practices as Key to Understanding Development NGOs" in P. Opoku-Mensah, D. Lewis, and T. Tvedt (ed.): *Reconceptualising NGOs and their Roles in Development: NGOs, Civil Society and the International Aid System*. Aalborg, Denmark: Aalborg University Press.
- Hoffman, A. J. (2001): "Linking Organizational and Field-Level Analyses: The Diffusion of Corporate Environmental Practice." *Organization & Environment* [online] 14 (2):133–156, URL: <http://oae.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1086026601142001> [cited 10 July 2011]
- Holtgrave, D. R., and Weber, E. U. (1993): "Dimensions of Risk Perception for Financial and Health Risks." *Risk Analysis* [online] 13 (5):553–558, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1539-6924.1993.tb00014.x> [cited 10 August 2011]
- Hubbard, D. W. (2009): *The Failure of Risk Management: Why it's Broken and How to Fix It*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hudson, A. (2000): "Making the Connection : Legitimacy Claims, Legitimacy Chains and Northern NGOs' International Advocacy" in D. Lewis and T. Wallace (ed.): *After the "New Policy Agenda"? Non-governmental Organisations and the Search for Development Alternatives*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

- 
- Hutter, B. M. (2001): *Regulation and risk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hutter, B. M., and Power, M. (2005): *Organizational Encounters with Risk*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- ICNL. (2009a): “Global Trends in NGO Law.” *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* [online] 1 (1):1–13, URL: <http://www.icnl.org/research/trends/trends1-1.pdf> [cited 09 May 2012]
- ICNL. (2009b): *Survey of Tax Laws Affecting NGOs in the Newly Independent States*. International Center for Non-profit Law (ICNL) [online] URL: <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/index.php>
- INGO Accountability Charter (2012): *Charter content* [online]. URL: <http://www.ingoaccountabilitycharter.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/INGO-Accountability-Charter.pdf> [cited 01 February 2012]
- International Save the Children Alliance (2007): *Advocacy Matters: Helping children change their world - An International Save the Children Alliance guide to advocacy – Participant’s manual* [online]. URL: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Advocacy%20Matters%20Participants%20Manual.pdf>
- Jaeger, C. C., Rosa, E. A., Renn, O., and Webler, T. (2001): *Risk, Uncertainty, and Rational Action*. London, UK: Earthscan.
- Jasanoff, S. (1999): “The Songlines of Risk.” *Environmental Values* 8(2):135-152.
- Jayawickrama, S. (2012): *Save the Children International: Advancing New Structures, Systems and Governance to Deliver Impact at Scale*. Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations [online] URL: [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/hauser/engage/humanitarianorganizations/research/documents/save\\_the\\_children\\_advancing\\_new\\_structures\\_systems\\_governance.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/hauser/engage/humanitarianorganizations/research/documents/save_the_children_advancing_new_structures_systems_governance.pdf) [cited 16 September 2012]
- Jerrard, R. N., Barnes, N., and Reid, A. (2008): “Design, Risk and New Product Development in Five Small Creative Companies.” *International Journal of Design* [online] 2 (1):21–30, URL: <http://www.ijdesign.org/ojs/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/218> [cited 06 December 2011]
- Jordan, L., and Tuijl, P. van. (2006): *NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles and Innovations*. London UK: Earthscan.
- Kasperson, R. E., Renn, O., Slovic, P., Brown, H. S., Emel, J., Goble, R., Kasperson, J. X., and Ratick, S. (1988): “The Social Amplification of Risk: A Conceptual Framework.” *Risk Analysis* [online] 8 (2):177–187, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1539-6924.1988.tb01168.x> [cited 10 October 2012]

- 
- Kendra, J. (2007): "The Reconstitution of Risk Objects." *Journal of Risk Research* 10(1):29–48.
- Kingston, M., and Behn, O. (2010): *Risk Thresholds in Humanitarian Assistance*. London, UK: European Interagency Security Forum (EISF).
- Kouabenan, D.R. (1998): "Beliefs and the Perception of Risks and Accidents." *Risk Analysis* 18(3): 243-252.
- Krimsky, S. (1992): "The Role of Theory in Risk Studies" in S. Krimsky and D. Golding (ed.): *Social Theories of Risk*. London, UK: Praeger.
- Kruse, S.-E., Forss, K., and Lakså, K. O. K. (2009): *Organisational Review Save the Children Norway*. Oslo, Norway: Norad.
- Krücken, G., and Hasse, R. (2007): "Systems Theory, Societal Contexts, and Organizational Heterogeneity" in R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, R. Suddaby, and K. Sahlin (ed.): *Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kuroda, K., and Imata, K. (2003): "Evolution of Legitimacy Discussion of International Development NGOs and its Absence in Japan." Paper presented at the ARNOVA Annual Conference, Denver, 20-22 November.
- Lakoff, G. (1987): *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lane, C., and Quack, S. (1999): "The Social Dimensions of Risk: Bank Financing of SMEs in Britain and Germany." *Organization Studies* 20 (6):987–1010.
- Larsen, L. (2006): *Historien om Redd Barna: Medlemsorganisasjonen 1946–2006*. Oslo, Norway: Redd Barna.
- Laurila, J. (1997): "Promoting Research Access and Informant Rapport in Corporate Settings: Notes From Research on a Crisis Company." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 13 (4):407–418.
- Lewis, D. (2001): *The Management of Development Organizations: An Introduction*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Lim, W.-K. (2012): "Understanding Risk Governance: Introducing Sociological Neoinstitutionalism and Foucauldian Governmentality for Further Theorizing." *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science* 2 (3):11–20.
- Lister, S. (2001): "The Consultation Practice of Northern NGOs: A Study of British Organizations in Guatemala." *Journal of International Development* 13(7): 1071-1082.
- Lister, S. (2003): "NGO Legitimacy: Technical Issue or Social Construct?" *Critique of Anthropology* 23 (2):175-192.

- 
- Liu, R. (2011): "Seeking Legitimacy: The Life, Death and Revival of a Chinese NGO". Paper presented at the 2011 International Conference on Social Science and Humanity, Singapore, 26-28 February.
- Liu, S., Huang and J.-C., Brown, G.L. (1998): "Information and Risk Perception: A Dynamis Adjustment Process." *Risk Analysis* 18(6): 689-699
- Lupton, D. (1999): *Risk*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Lupton, D., and Tulloch, J. (2002a): "Risk is Part of Your Life: Risk Epistemologies among a Group of Australians." *Sociology* 36 (2):317–334.
- Lupton, D., and Tulloch, J. (2002b): "Life would be pretty dull without risk: Voluntary risk-taking and its pleasures." *Health, Risk & Society* 4 (2):113–124.
- MacCrimmon, K. R., Wehrung, D. A., and Stanbury, W. T. (1986): *Taking Risks: the Management of Uncertainty*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Macrae, C. (2007): "Interrogating the Unknown: Risk Analysis and Sense-making in Airline Safety Oversight". CARR Discussion Papers, DP 43. Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK [online] URL: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/36123/1/Disspaper43.pdf>
- March, J. G., and Shapira, Z. (1987): "Managerial Perspectives on Risk and Risk Taking." *Management Science* 33 (11):1404–1418.
- Marcus, L. (2012): "The Aid Industry is Threatening Partner Countries with its ROD... Results Obsession Disorder" in K. King (ed.): *NORRAG NEWS 47: Value for Money in International Education: A New World of Results, Impacts and Outcomes?* (Vol. 47, pp. 55–56), NORRAG.
- Marek, J., Tangenes, B., and Hellesoy, O. H. (1985): "Experience of Risk and Safety" in O. H. Hellesoy (ed.): *Work Environment Statfjord Field: Work Environment, Health and Safety on a North Sea Platform*. Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.
- Mearns, K., Flin, R., and Connor, P. O. (2001): "Sharing Worlds of Risk: Improving Communication with Crew Resource Management." *Journal of Risk Research* 4 (4):377–392.
- Metcalf, V., Martin, E., and Pantuliano, S. (2011): *Risk in Humanitarian Action: Towards A Common Approach?* London, UK: Overseas Development Institute.
- Meyer, J. W. and Rowan, B. (1977): "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* [online] 83 (2):340–363, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778293> [cited 11 May 2012]

- 
- Meyer, J. W. and Scott, W. R. (1983): *Organizational Environments: Ritual and Rationality*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Mohammed, K. (2007): *Managing Risk: A Case Study of a Non-Government Organisation that Provides Long-Term Care and Support Services*. D. Phil. Dissertation. Massey University, Department of Management.
- Mohammed, K. (2010): "Perceptual Aspect of Risk: The Concept and Management- A Qualitative Study of a Non-Governmental Healthcare Organization." *An-Najah Univ. J. of Res. (Humanities)* 24 (3):986–1016.
- Mol, A. (2002): *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham, UK: Duke University Press.
- Moses, J. W., and Knutsen, T. L. (2007): *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nee, V. (2003): "The New Institutionalism in Economics and Sociology." CSES Working Paper Series No. 4. Center for the Study of Economy and Society.
- Nicolini, D., Yanow, D. and Gherardi, S. (2003): *Knowing in Organizations: A Practice-Based Approach*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.
- Norad. (2006): "The Agreement Manual" [online] URL: <http://www.norad.no/en/tools-and-publications/publications/publication?key=109586> [cited 10 June 2011]
- Norad. (2010): Beslutningsdokument for Samarbeidsorganisasjoner med Nye Avtaler, Inklusive Kjernestøtteavtaler – Redd Barna. Saksnummer:0901001-11 [unpublished internal document]
- Norad. (2011): "Grant Scheme Rules for support to International Organisations and Networks: Chapter post 160.75" [online] URL: [http://www.norad.no/no/tilskudd/s%C3%B8k-st%C3%B8tte/\\_attachment/324249?ts=12f71f2c60d](http://www.norad.no/no/tilskudd/s%C3%B8k-st%C3%B8tte/_attachment/324249?ts=12f71f2c60d) [cited 10 February 2012]
- Nordtveit, B. H. (2012): "Old Discourse, New Vocabulary; Value for Money" in K. King (ed.): *NORRAG NEWS 47: Value for Money in International Education: A New World of Results, Impacts and Outcomes?* (Vol. 47, pp. 55–56), NORRAG
- Oaxaca, N. del C. M. (2006): *A true partnership for development? Case study of a partnership between NGOs for education from Peru and Norway*. M. Phil. Thesis. University of Oslo, Faculty of Education/ Institute for Educational Research.
- OECD-DAC. (1996). *Shaping the Twenty-First Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation*. Paris, France: OECD-DAC.

- 
- OECD. (2011): *Managing Risks in Fragile and Transitional Contexts: the Price of Success*. OECD.
- Oliver, C. (1990): "Determinants of Interorganizational Relationships: Integration and Future Directions." *Academy of Management Review* 15(2):241-265.
- Oliver, C. (1991): "Strategic Responses to Institutional Processes." *Academy of Management Review* [online] 16 (1):145–179, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/258610> [cited 10 May 2011]
- Oltedal, S., Moen, B., Klempe, H., and Rundmo, T. (2004): *Explaining Risk: An Evaluation of Cultural Theory*. Trondheim, Norway: Rotunde Publikasjoner.
- Ossewaarde, R., Nijhof, A., and Heyse, L. (2008): "Dynamics of NGO Legitimacy: How Organizing Betrays Core Missions of INGOs." *Public Admin. Dev.* 28:42–53.
- Oxford Dictionary. (2012): Dilemma [online] URL: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/dilemma?q=dilemma> [cited 22 October 2012]
- Patel, A. M., Xavier, R. J., and Broom, G. (2005): "Toward a Model of Organizational Legitimacy in Public Relations: Theory and Practice." Paper presented at the International Communication Association Conference, New York, 26-3May.
- Pearce, J. (1997): "Between Co-option and Irrelevance: Latin American NGOs in the 1990s" in D. Hulme and M. Edwards (ed.): *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?* Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- PERRI. (2005): "What's in a Frame? Social Organization, Risk Perception and the Sociology of Knowledge." *Journal of Risk Research* 8 (2):91–118.
- Perrow, C. (1984): *Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Peters, E., and Slovic, P. (1996): "The Role of Affect and Worldviews as Orienting Dispositions in the Perception and Acceptance of Nuclear Power." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* [online] 26 (16):1427–1453, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1996.tb00079.x> [cited 10 April 2012]
- Pidgeon, N. (1998): "Shaking the Kaleidoscope of Disasters Research – A Reply." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* [online] 6 (2):97–101, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.00078> [cited 10 May 2012]
- Pidgeon, N., Simmons, P., Sarre, S., Henwood, K., and Smith, N. (2008): "The Ethics of Socio-Cultural Risk Research." *Health, Risk & Society* 10 (4):321–329.

- 
- Powell, W. W. (2007): "The New Institutionalism" in S. Clegg and J. R. Bailey (ed.): *The International Encyclopedia of Organization Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Power, M. (2004): *The Risk Management of Everything: Rethinking the Politics of Uncertainty*. London, UK: Demos.
- Power, M. (2009): "The Risk Management of Nothing." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 34 (6-7):849–855.
- Rachman, S.J. (1990): *Fear and Courage*. San Francisco, CA: W F Freeman.
- Rauh, K. (2010): "NGOs, Foreign Donors, and Organizational Processes: Passive NGO Recipients or Strategic Actors ?" *McGill Sociological Review* [online] 1(January):29–45, URL: [http://www.mcgill.ca/files/msr/NGOs\\_Foreign\\_Donors.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/files/msr/NGOs_Foreign_Donors.pdf) [cited 16 July 2012]
- Rayner, S. (1986): "Management of Radiation Hazards in Hospitals: Plural Rationalities in a Single Institution." *Social Studies of Science* 16 (4):573–591.
- Renn, O. (1998): "Three Decades of Risk Research: Accomplishments and New Challenges." *Journal of Risk Research* 1 (1):49–71.
- Renn, O. (2008a): "Concepts of Risk: An Interdisciplinary Review – Part 2: Integrative Approaches." *Gaia* 17 (2):196–204.
- Renn, O. (2008b): "Concepts of Risk: An Interdisciplinary Review – Part 1: Disciplinary Risk Concepts." *Gaia* 17 (1):50–66.
- Rescher, N. (1983): *Risk: A Philosophical Introduction to the Theory Of Risk Evaluation and Management*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Rogers, G. O. (1997): "The Dynamics of Risk Perception: How Does Perceived Risk Respond to Risk Events?" *Risk Analysis* [online] 17 (6):745–757, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1539-6924.1997.tb01280.x> [cited 02 June 2012]
- Rosa, E. A. (1998): "Metatheoretical Foundations for Post-Normal Risk." *Journal of Risk Research* 1 (1):15–44.
- Rowley, E., Burns, L., and Burnham, G. (2010): "Key Security Messages for NGO Field Staff: What and How do NGOs Communicate about Security in their Policies and Guidelines?" *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* [online] (47):8–11, URL: <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-47/key-security-messages-for-ngo-field-staff-what-and-how-do-ngos-communicate-about-security-in-their-policies-and-guidelines> [cited 10 June 2012]

- 
- Ruef, M., and Scott, W. R. (1998): "A Multidimensional Model of Organizational Legitimacy: Hospital Survival in Changing Institutional Environments." *Administrative Science Quarterly* [online] 43 (4):877–904, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2393619> [cited 03 November 2011]
- Saldaña, J. (2009): *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sandelowski, M. (1995): "Sample Size in Qualitative Research." *Res. Nurs. Health* 18: 179–183.
- Sauder, R. (2002): *Continuity and Dissonance: Institutional Relations of a South African NGO*. D. Phil. Dissertation. University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.
- Saxby, J. (1996): "Who Owns the Private Aid Agencies?" in D. Sogge (ed.): *Compassion and Calculation: The Business of Private Foreign Aid*. London, UK: Pluto Press.
- Save the Children. (2009): *Save the Children Global Strategy (2010-2015)* [unpublished internal document]
- Save the Children. (2010a): *Child Safeguarding Protocol* [unpublished internal document]
- Save the Children. (2010b): *CPH Safety and Security Policy and Standards* [unpublished internal document]
- Save the Children. (2012a). *Country Office Nepal/Bhutan – annual report 2011* [online] URL: [http://issuu.com/scnepal/docs/savethechildren\\_annual\\_report\\_nepal\\_bhutan\\_2012](http://issuu.com/scnepal/docs/savethechildren_annual_report_nepal_bhutan_2012) [cited 23 October 2012]
- Save the Children. (2012b): *What is Child Rights Governance?* [online] URL: <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/content/crgi> [cited 22 October 2012]
- Scholtz, R.W., and Tietje, O. (2002): *Embedded Case Study Methods: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- SCI. (2011): *CPH Grant Management Manual* [unpublished internal document]
- SCI. (2012): *Visible leadership for children: Annual review 2011* [online]. London: Save the Children International (SCI). URL: [http://web.stc-resources.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SCI\\_AR\\_2011\\_LoRes.pdf](http://web.stc-resources.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SCI_AR_2011_LoRes.pdf) [cited 19 October 2012]
- SCN. (2007a): *Human Resource Policy* [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2007b): *Policy for Strengthening Local Capacity* [unpublished internal document]



- 
- SCN. (2009): *Save the Children Norway's Strategy (2010-2013)* [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2010a): *Country Office Ethiopia - Annual Plan 2011* [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2010b): *Country Office Nepal/Bhutan - Annual Plan 2011* [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2010c): *Nepal Programme - Strategic Framework for Cooperation (2010 - 2012)*. Country Office Nepal. Funding application submitted to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2010d): *Policy on Children's Participation* [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2010e): *Program Handbook* [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2010f): *Procurement Policy and Guidelines* [unpublished internal document]
- SCN. (2011): *Organisasjonskart* [Intranet]
- SCN. (2012a): *Annual Report 2011* [online]. Oslo, Norway: Save the Children Norway. URL: <http://www.reddbarna.no/?hmfile=pUCE6UskXobyK-fqkCc89w==> [cited 10 September 2012]
- SCN. (2012b): *Hovedstyrets Årsberetning 2011* [online]. Oslo: Save the Children Norway. URL: [http://www.reddbarna.no/?hmfile=8TkrHHog\\_WDFfcKrUF16qA==](http://www.reddbarna.no/?hmfile=8TkrHHog_WDFfcKrUF16qA==) [cited 10 September 2012]
- SCN. (2012c): *Varslinger 2011* [online]. Oslo, Norway: Save the Children Norway. URL: <http://www.reddbarna.no/om-oss/organisasjonen/organisasjonsoppbygging> [cited 10 September 2012]
- Scott, W.R. (1994): "Rationalized Environments" in W.R. Scott and J.W. Meyer (ed.): *Institutional Environments and Organizations: Structural Complexity and Individualism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scott, W. R. (1995): *Institutions and organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sharp, J.A., and Howard, K. (1996): *The Management of a Student Research Project* (2nd ed.) Aldershot, UK: Gower.
- Shenton, A., and Hayter, S. (2004): "Strategies for Gaining Access to Organisations and Informants in Qualitative Studies." *Education for Information* [online] 22:223–231, URL: <http://iospress.metapress.com/index/NPKY30UDY4PHY9G9.pdf> [cited 17 January 2012]
- Shrader-Frechette, K. S. (1991): *Risk and Rationality: Philosophical Foundations for Populist Reforms*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- 
- Sjöberg, L. (1993): "Life-Styles and Risk Perception." Risk Research Report No.14  
Centre for Risk Research - Stockholm School of Economics.
- Sjöberg, L. (2000): "Factors in Risk Perception." *Risk Analysis* [online] 20 (1):1–11,  
URL: [http://paul-hadrien.info/backup/LSE/IS 490/utile/factors in risk perception.pdf](http://paul-hadrien.info/backup/LSE/IS_490/utile/factors_in_risk_perception.pdf) [cited 02 January 2012]
- Sjöberg, L., Moen, B.-E. and Rundmo, T. (2004): *Explaining Risk Perception: An Evaluation of the Psychometric Paradigm in Risk Perception Research*.  
Trondheim, Norway: Rotunde Publikasjoner.
- Sjöberg, L., and Wahlberg, A. (2002): "Risk Perception and New Age Beliefs." *Risk Analysis* 22(4): 751-764.
- Slovic, P. (1992): "Perception of Risk: Reflections on the Psychometric Paradigm" in  
S. Krimsky and D. Golding (ed.): *Social Theories of Risk*. London, UK:  
Praeger.
- Slovic, P. (1999): "Trust, Emotion, Sex, Politics, and Science: Surveying the Risk-  
Assessment Battlefield." *Risk Analysis* [online] 19 (4):689–701, URL:  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10765431> [cited 05 December 2011]
- Slovic, P. (2000): *The Perception of Risk*. London, UK: Earthscan.
- Slovic, P., Finucane, M. L., Peters, E., and MacGregor, D. G. (2004): "Risk as  
Analysis and Risk as Feelings: Some Thoughts about Affect, Reason, Risk,  
and Rationality." *Risk Analysis* [online] 24 (2):311–22, URL:  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15078302> [cited 19 August 2011]
- Slovic, P., Fischhoff, B. and Lichtenstein, S. (1982): "Why Study Risk Perception?"  
*Risk Analysis* [online] 2 (2):83–93, URL:  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1539-6924.1982.tb01369.x/abstract> [cited 30 July 2011]
- Slovic P., and Peters E. (1998): "The Importance of Worldviews in Risk  
Perception." *Risk Dec. Policy* 3(2), 165–170.
- Slovic, P., and Weber, E. U. (2002): "Perception of Risk Posed by Extreme Events"  
[online] URL:  
[http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/chrr/documents/meetings/roundtable/white\\_papers/slovic\\_wp.pdf](http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/chrr/documents/meetings/roundtable/white_papers/slovic_wp.pdf) [cited 03 December 2011]
- Smallman, C., and Smith, D. (2003): "Patterns of Managerial Risk Perceptions:  
Exploring the Dimensions of Managers' Accepted Risks." *Risk Management*  
[online] 5 (1):7–32, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/3867891>  
[cited 07 November 2011]
- Smith, B. S. (1999): "No Organization is an Island unto Itself" [online]. URL:  
<http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0003999399901326?showall=true>  
[cited 06 May 2012]

- 
- Stake, R. E. (1994): "Case Studies" in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (ed.): *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (1995): *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2010): *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*. London, UK: Guilford Press.
- Starr, C. (1969): "Social Benefit versus Technological Risk." *Science* 165:1232–1238.
- Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., and Didomenico, V. (2009): *HPG Policy Brief 34 Providing aid in insecure environments: 2009 Update and the operational response*. London, UK: HPG.
- Stryker, R. (1994): "Rules, Resources, and Legitimacy Processes: Some Implications for Social Conflict, Order, and Change." *American Journal of Sociology* [online] 99 (4):847–910, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2781734> [cited 03 January 2012]
- Stuart, T. E. (2000): "Interorganizational Alliances and the Performance of Firms: A Study of Growth and Innovation." *Strategic Management Journal*, 21(8):791-811
- Suchman, M. (1995): "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches." *Academy of Management Review* [online] 20 (3):571–610, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/258788> [cited 02 June 2012]
- Swanson, R. A., and Holton, E. F. (2005): *Research in Organizations: Foundations and Methods of Inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Taylor-Gooby, P., and Zinn, J. O. (2006): "Risk as an Interdisciplinary Research Area" in P. Taylor-Gooby and J. O. Zinn (ed.): *Risk in Social Science*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Thompson, M., Ellis, R., and Wildavsky, A. (1990): *Cultural Theory*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Trivunovic, M., Johnsen, J. and Mathisen, H. (2011): *Developing an NGO Corruption Risk Management System: Considerations for Donors*. Bergen, Norway: Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI).
- Tulloch, J., and Lupton, D. (2003): *Risk and Everyday Life*. London, UK: Sage.
- Turner, B. A. (1976): "The Organizational and Interorganizational Development of Disasters." *Administrative Science Quarterly* [online] 21 (3):378–397, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2391850> [cited 29 June 2012]
- Tvedt, T. (2006): "The International Aid System and the Non-Governmental Organisations: A New Research Agenda." *Journal of International Development* [online] 18:677–690.

- 
- Tversky A., and Kahneman D. (1974): "Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases." *Science* 185 (4157): 1124–1131.
- Urban, J. and Ščasný, M. (2007): "Determinants of Risk Perception Bias: An Empirical Study of Economically Active Population of the Czech Republic" [online] URL: [http://kvalitazivota.vubp.cz/prispevky/sbornik\\_mezinarodni\\_konference/sbornik\\_1.pdf](http://kvalitazivota.vubp.cz/prispevky/sbornik_mezinarodni_konference/sbornik_1.pdf)
- Vaughan, D. (1996): *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Vidal, P., Guixé, I., and Sureda, M. (2006): "How is legitimacy generated in NGO's?" [online] URL: [http://www.observatoritercersector.org/pdf/publicacions/05\\_legitimacy\\_en.pdf](http://www.observatoritercersector.org/pdf/publicacions/05_legitimacy_en.pdf) [cited 05 March 2012]
- Xiaoguang, K., and Li, F. (2006): "NGO Governance in China: Achievements and Dilemmas" in: L. Jordan and P. van. Tuijl (ed.): *NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles and Innovations*. London, UK: Earthscan.
- Wallace, T. (1997): "New Development Agendas: Changes in the UK NGO Policies and Procedures." *Review of African Political Economy* 71, 31-55.
- Wallace, T., Bornstein, L., and Chapman J. (2006): *The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs*. Warwickshire, UK: ITDG.
- WANGO. (2004): *Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs*, World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO).
- Ward, J., and Purdy, G. (2010): *HB 266:2010: Guide for managing risk in not-for-profit organizations*. Sydney, Australia: Standards Australia.
- Wilkinson, I. (2001): "Social Theories of Risk Perception: At Once Indispensable and Insufficient." *Current Sociology* [online] 49 (1):1–22, URL: <http://csi.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0011392101049001002> [cited 01 February 2012]
- Williamson, J., and Weyman, A. (2005): *Review of the Public Perception of Risk, and Stakeholder Engagement*, Harpur Hill, UK: HSL.
- Wilson-Grau, R. (2003): "The Risk Approach to Strategic Management in Development NGOs." *Development in Practice* [online] 14 (5):533–536, URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0961452032000166465> [cited 04 July 2011]
- World Bank. (2011): *Program-for-Results Financing* [online] URL: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTRESLENDING/Resources/7514725-1325006967127/WBbooklet12-21-11.pdf> [cited 11 June 2012]

- 
- Wählberg, A. A. (2001): "The Theoretical Features of Some Current Approaches to Risk Perception." *Journal of Risk Research* 4 (3):237–250.
- Wählberg, A. A., and Sjöberg, L. (2000): "Risk Perception and the Media. A Review of Research on Media Influence on Public Risk Perception." *Journal of Risk Research* 3(1): 31–50.
- Yeager, P. C., and Kram, K. E. (1990): "Fielding Hot Topics in Cool Settings: The Study of Corporate Ethics." *Qualitative Sociology* 13(2):127-148.
- Yin, R. K. (2003a): *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2003b): *Applications of Case Study Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zinn, J. O. (2006): "Recent Developments in Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung* [online] 7 (1):1–11, URL: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0601301>. [cited 02 January 2012]
- Zucker, L. G. (1977): "The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence." *American Sociological Review* [online] 42 (5):726–743, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2094862> [cited 05 July 2011]